SUN CULT IN PRĀCYADEŚA

History, Religion & Iconography

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

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Foreword by
Prof. Pranabananda Jash

By

Dr. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar
Department of History
University of North Bengal

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Dedicated
to
My Father
Thakurdas Sarkar
&
My Mother
Sarojini Sarkar

FOREWORD

I have a great pleasure to contribute this Foreword to Dr. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar's book – *Sun Cult in Prācyadeśa*, which portrays a comprehensive scenario of the history and evolution of the Sun cult and Sun-worship in early eastern India with special emphasis on Bengal.

The Sūryadevatā (Sun-god), the celestial luminary, was an object of great veneration to the ancient Indians from a very early time. The Sun is invoked in every morning and evening through muttering of the *Gāyatrī-mantra* showing the supremacy of that divine Sun, the godhead, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return. Again, the identification of the Sun with Time in the Vedic literature is an indication to the metaphysical background of the Sun-worship. The god was given many names like Savitā, Puṣā, Bhaga, Vivasvān, Mitra, Aryamā and Viṣṇu, emphasizing his different aspects and a number of qualities and functions were assigned to him.

The metaphysical background of the Sun-god came to be enriched and developed in the Epic-Puranic period. In fact, his importance and empowerment lies in his diverse functioning in bestowing long life, prosperity and fame, apart from his other activities of removing sins and also all kinds of diseases. The Epics and the Purāṇas profusely eulogized the grace of the solar deity in his divine power of removing diseases, bestowing vigour, strength and long life.

Removing of all kinds of diseases, especially leprosy became the main trait of the cult-god, Sūrya, who assimilated certain foreign elements, not basically different from the indigenous one, after the immigration of some priests (Maga-Brāhmaṇas) from Persia in North India during the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa rule. Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* expressed specifically that the Sun image should not only be shown wearing a Northerner's dress (*udīcyaveṣa*) but should also be wearing a *viyanga* (a variant of *avyanga*). Varāhamihira further mentions that it was the Magas who were only eligible priests for the installation of the image of the Sun-god. It is the re-oriented Sun-cult under the Magian influence that became the established cult from the Kuṣāṇa period till the thirteenth century A.D. whose standard scriptures are the *Sāmba* and the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇas* (R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upa-Purāṇa*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1958). The Puranic evidences speak of the unquestionable supremacy of the deity, exclusiveness in the devotion, proper procedure and a body of sectarian Saura literature. Moreover, the names and titles like Varāhamihira, Paramasaugata, Paramādityabhaṭṭāraka, etc. also testify to the sectarian character of the Sun-worship in the Puranic tradition. The popularity of the solar god is further developed in the subsequent times as is known from Mayura's (father-in-law of Bāṇabhaṭṭa) *Sūryaśataka* which is an exercise in the tune of sectarian Sun-worship. Definite changes in the realm of the Sun-worship from the Vedic tradition can be perceived in terms of concept of the godhead, rites, rituals and institutions. It is to be noted in the connection that the *daivajña-ācāryas,* experts in astronomy and astrology, were regarded as descendants of the Maga-Brāhmaṇas. Similarly, another class of Brāhmaṇas named Bhojakas mentioned in the Deo-Baranark (Shahabad District, Bihar) Pillar Inscription of Jīvitagupta II was possibly the descendants of the Magas through the women of the Bhoja race. Some scholars are of the opinion that "They were merged in course of time in the vast mass of the Indian people, partially maintaining their individual entity by forming a separate caste. This was the caste from which the *daivajñas, Grahavipras* and *Agradānīs* (who were given precedence in the presentation of food and gifts in times of *śrāddha* ceremonies) were recruited. Some of them took to the profession of the preparation of horoscopes, while others officiated as priests especially for the performance of *graha-pūjā* to bring peace and prosperity to the house-holder".

Another important and significant change in the process of the Puranic Sun-worship is the influence and adoption of Tantricism. It is still an enigma to the scholars pertaining to the question of Tantric practices in the Sun-cult. It should be noted that Tantricism is a form of *Sādhanā* (a practice, a ritual) like the *bhakti* form of *Sādhanā, jñāna* form of *Sādhanā,* etc. for obtaining *siddhi* or salvation. In order to make the Tantric practices in the Sun-cult, the later *Purāṇas* (*Sāmba Purāṇa*) are full of references and comprehensive descriptions. The method of initiation, *mahāmantra, mantranyāsa, maṇḍalas* and six acts (*vasīkaraṇa, ākarṣaṇa, māraṇa, uccāṭana, vidveṣaṇa* and *stambhana*) are some of the essential traits indicating Tantric influence on the Sun-cult. Even the impact of Tantricism on the Sun-cult is discernable from the Konark (Orissa) Sun-temple with the Tantric scenes on the outer walls as observed by some scholars (V.C. Srivastava, *Sun Worship in Ancient India,* Allahabad, 1972). In fact, the Tantric tradition came to exert influence on the Sun-cult in the medieval period onwards, not earlier than the 12th century A.D., in eastern India where the Tantrika tradition came to be displayed in plastic art of the contemporary period.

Historical evidence regarding the existence of *Saura*-cult in medieval Bengal and Bihar comes from the epigraphic and iconographic records of the Pala-Sena dynasty. Viśvarūpaṣeṇa and Sūryaṣena were staunch devotees of Sūrya. It is interesting to recapitulate the bearings of an inscription incised on the pedestal of a thirteenth century A.D. image. This seated Sūrya image recovered from Quashbah near Bairhatta (Dinajpur) nicely portrays the spirit of the Sun-worship:

Om śrīmad vaktraśivāchārya kārito bhūti kāmadaḥ/
Sūryaḥ samastarogāṇām harttā viśvaprakāśakaḥ//

that is, "this image of the Sun, the bestower of welfare and desire, the remover of all diseases and the irradiator of the universe, has been caused to be made by the illustrious Vaktraśiva."

However, separate existence as a cult for the exclusive worship of the Sun-god is probably obliterated presently, but its popularity remains unaltered among the *Smārta Pañcopāsaka*s, irrespective of any sectarian affiliation, while they offer veneration to the rising Sun with the hymn –

Om javākusumasaṅkāsam kāsyapeyām mahadyutim/
dhvantarim sarvapāpāghnam praṇato'smi divākaram//

Furthermore, it is also a fact that no distinct sect and school of philosophy presently persists in eastern India centering round the solar deity, but the worship of the solar god is still survived in some forms or other through the practice of the folk-worship and/or folk rituals in India like the *Chhaṭha-Pūjā, Maghamaṇḍala vrata, Itu-pūjā*, etc.

The present work, as rightly confessed by the author, 'is not a startling discovery of hitherto unknown sources, but a patient compilation and scientific interpretation of information contained in known sources', suggesting fresh approaches to the study of fresh investigations. It offers a wealth of information, both literary and archaeological, about the history and religious significance of the Sun-god. It is important both as a scholarly study and as a work of interpretation that explores the hidden relationship between Indian religion and art.

Readers of this work will not only learn many interesting facts about the Sun-god, past and present, but also understand why this mighty deity has been from time immemorial considered very powerful and popular to his devotees as well as common milieu. The publication, I believe, will serve for long as a standard work to the inquisitive researchers in the field.

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PREFACE

Among all the ancient images discovered in Eastern India especially in undivided Bengal, those of the Sun god numerically, occupy a position second to that of Viṣṇu alone. This clearly shows that the Sun god had been one of the most popular deities in this part of the country in pre-Mohammedan days. Even today, the Sun is one of the five conspicuous deities of the Hindu pantheon. But it is surprising to note that the Sun-cult of this region has not received its due attention as is given to other cults. Broadly speaking, no individual study of this cult in this part of the country has been done so far, though a few articles have appeared on some of its different aspects here and there. The materials for the study of thiis cult still lie hidden in the original sources and scattered in innumerable journals. Therefore, I have been tempted to tread on this almost untrodden field, which is full of possibilities and thought-provoking investigation.

The present study on *Sun Cult in Prācyadeśa* is the result of quite a few years of an extensive library work and comprehensive field survey that I had painstakingly undertaken. It covers a long period from the earliest times to the end of the ancient period i.e. 12th -13th centuries A.D., though Sun worship in present times at the folk level has been discussed to hint at its currency among the rustic masses since time immemorial.

To have a proper understanding of the subject, the entire work is divided into six chapters, three appendices and a brief *résumé*. All the chapters are again sub-divided into several sections and sub-sections highlighting proper importance and significance of the objects and legends.

Keeping in mind the objective of our study related to the worship of Sun in eastern India, we would like to discuss the subject comprehensively under several chapters as said above. Besides the introduction, we have dealt with the worship of the Sun in the Vedic literature in the second chapter followed by the discussion on the Sun worship in the Epic and Purāṇic literature in the next chapter. The worship of the Sun is closely related to a legend of the *Sāmba Purāṇa*, and the role of the Iranian Sun-worshippers (Maga Brāhmaṇas) has also been investigated in this context. The fourth chapter deals with the growth and popularity of Sun worship in early Bengal and its neighbouring regions, while in the fifth we have made a thorough probe into the different types of Sun-images discovered in various parts of eastern India and preserved either in the museums or in the private collections. The factors responsible for the subsequent decline in the popularity of Sun worship are the subject matter of the subsequent chapter. A brief *reśumé* of the entire work is incorporated highlighting the religious texts of the contemporary period and the archaeological objects so far available.

In the appendices, we have included some interesting matters about the Sun worship in early Bengal. These are:

(a) Sun Temples in Bengal;
(b) Sun Worship in Folk-tradition;
(c) Inscriptions (with proper translation) appearing on the Sun-images discovered in Bengal.

It is my humble submission to the scholars that the main feature of this work is not a startling discovery of hitherto unknown sources, but a patient and scientific interpretation of the information contained in the known sources. Some aspects of the subject were earlier treated by the competent scholars in books and monographs but a complete integrated study of all of them was not available in all its essential formative trends and evolutionary courses.

* * * *

The present thesis has been completed under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya, Former Jadunath Sarkar Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal. It was Dr. Bhattacharya who, for the first time initiated the importance of the subject of investigation to me, and also evinced a keen interest for guiding me during the greater part of my research-span. I am deeply beholden to him for his guidance and supervision at the time of my investigation.

While recasting the thesis, I have taken enormous guidance and help from Professor Pranabananda Jash, Visva-Bharati. I offer my profound respect to him. Moreover, for his splendid *Foreword* and encouragement, a special word is due to Professor Jash whose true greatness lies in his knowledge of the human heart; and no words are adequate to express my gratitude to this renowned scholar of Indological Studies.

I am also indebted to Dr. Shyamal Chandra Guha Roy, Reader in History, Siliguri College, Darjeeling for his guidance after the retirement of Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. I sincerely acknowledge the academic guidance of Professor T. K. Roychoudhury of the Department of History, University of North Bengal in connection with my research work. I offer my deep respect to him. I also remember the colleagues and authorities of Kurseong College for their ungrudging help in completion of the work. I thank them all.

In the completion of the present work I have been helped by many in more ways than one and my acknowledgements are due to all without mentioning any particular name.

I am thankful to the authorities and staff members of the Asiatic Society, National

Library, Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Indian Museum – all in Calcutta; National Museum (New Delhi); North Bengal University Library; and also Varendra Research Museum (Rajshahi), Bangladesh, National Museum (Dhaka), etc. for kindly permitting and helping me to use their libraries and museums.

Dr. R.S. Shukla of Pratibha Prakashan, Delhi deserves sincere thanks from the author for publishing the present work within a short time. Despite my sincere and honest efforts, shortcomings and mistakes in the form of diacritical marks may have crept into the publication and for those lapses I crave indulgence.

Last but not the least, I have no expression to offer my love and best wishes to my wife Chandralekha and my son Chandrajoy who always revived my spirits by giving mental support and fabulous feedback in various ways.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.*
AEI	*Art of Eastern India.*
Ag. P.	*Agni Purāṇa.*
AGS	*Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra.*
AMC	Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art.
ASS	*Āpastamba Śrautasūtra.*
AR-VRS	*Annual Report of the Varendra Research Society.*
ASIAR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.*
AV	*Atharvaveda.*
BAU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.*
BDS	*Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra.*
Bhav. P.	*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa.*
BI	*Bibliotheca Indica.*
BNM	Bangladesh National Museum.
BSHI	Bengal Sculptures : Hindu Iconography up to C.1250 A.D.,
CBI	Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions
CII	Corpus Inscriptionam Indicarum,
CU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad.*
DHI	*Development of Hindu Iconography*
DIPGV	*Development of Iconography in Pre-Gupta Vaṅga.*
DM	Dinajpur Museum, Bangladesh.
EHI	*Elements of Hindu Iconography.*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica.*
ESB	*Early Sculpture of Bengal.*
GB	*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa.*
GDS	*Gautama Dharmasūtra.*
GGS	*Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra.*

HB-I	*History of Bengal.*
HBP	*History of the Bengali People.*
HGS	*Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhyasūtra.*
IA	*Indian Antiquary.*
IB	*Inscriptions of Bengal,* Vol. III.
IBBS	Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculpture in the Dacca Museum.
IMC	Indian Museum, Calcutta.
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.*
JISOA	*Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art,* XVI, 1948.
JRAS	*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.*
JUPHS	*Journal of U.P. Historical Society.*
KGS	*Khādira Gṛhyasūtra.*
KU	*Kauśītaki Upaniṣad.*
KKBI	*Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī-Brāhmī Inscriptions in West Bengal.*
Mat. P.	*Matsya Purāṇa.*
MBH	Mahābhārata.
MGS	*Mānava Gṛhyasūtra.*
MHM	Mahāsthāngarh Musuem.
MMC	Malda Museum Catalogue.
MRCSB	*Minor Religious Cults and Sects in Bengal .*
MS	*Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā.*
MU	*Maitrī Upaniṣad.*
OHRJ	*The Orissa Historical Research Journal.*
P.	*Purāṇa.*
PB	*Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa.*
PBPDD	*Prācīn Vaṅge Paurāṇik Dharma of Devabhāvanā.*
PGS	*Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra.*
Pl.	*Plate.*
Puranic Records	*Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs.*
Rām.	*Rāmāyaṇa.*
RPVU	*The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads.*
RV	*Ṛgveda.*
Sam. P.	*Sāmba Purāṇa.*
SAB	*Sculptural Art of Bangladesh.*
SAMC	State Archaeological Museum, Calcutta.

ŚB	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.*
SGS	*Sāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra.*
SMB	*Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa.*
SPP	*Sāhitya Parisṛat Patrikā.*
SSS	*Sāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra.*
Studies	*Studies in the Upa-Purāṇas,* Vol. I.
SU	*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.*
SV	*Sāmaveda.*
SVRM	*Sculpture in the Varendra Research Museum : A Descriptive Catalogue.*
SWAI-P	*Sun Worship in Ancient India,* Pandey.
SWAI-S	*Sun Worship in Ancient India,* Srivastava.
TA	*Taittirīya Āraṇyaka.*
TB	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.*
TS	*Taittirīya Saṁhitā.*
VDP	*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.*
VM	*Vedic Mythology.*
Vol	Volume/s.
VRM	Varendra Research Museum.
VS	*Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā.*
VSP	*Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat.*

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Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

The cultural life of India through the ages has been dominated by its preoccupation with the pursuit of religious values. The earliest inhabitants of India might have had their own religious system. The advent of the Āryans brought new streams of religious thought. Thereafter, the Brāhmaṇical religion had taken deep roots in the minds of the Indian people. Many and various forces of nature were duly personified as gods and goddesses and their worship formed an important aspect of the Vedic or Brāhmaṇical religion. Centering round the Brāhmaṇical deities, there developed different cults at different times. Sun worship is one of such cults. The fundamental facts that the Sun is the creator of day and night, and by being the source of light and heat on the earth, is the creator of life, and producer of food and vegetation, must have impressed the human mind from very early times.

A.S. Geden has rightly pointed out in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*[1] that Solar worship has been described as the real religion of India. Sun worship in India can be traced as early as the Neolithic period with the dawn of the farming economy. The deep sense of reverence for the beneficial qualities of the Sun led to its representation in symbolic forms on pre-historic and proto-historic (Indus Valley Culture) objects.

In the Vedic tradition, the Sun was worshipped under various forms and names such as Sūrya, Savitṛ, Mitra, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, Vivasvat, Bhaga and Aryaman. Most of these deities along with a few others came to form a group of divinities under the name of Ādityas. Some gods and goddesses of the solar family were invoked in the *Ṛgveda* and worshipped either in natural form or by means of symbols and fetishes or by meditation. The Later Vedic age continued the worship of the atmospheric Sun under various names and aspects. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* also inform about the growing popularity of Sun worship in the period of their composition. The geographical extension of the Sun cult appears to have been the whole of northern India. The Sun was generally being represented, as noted earlier, by means of various symbols before the development of the solar cult. Sūrya, however, appeared in human form from an early period in Indian history. From the early centuries of the Christian era, the north Indian form of the Sun Cult was greatly oriented by the Irānian Sun worshippers — Magi. In course of time, these Maga Brāhmaṇas spread in large numbers from north-western India to eastern India as is known from Govindapur

(Bihar) Inscription dated 1137 A.D.[2] It was mainly in the efforts of these Sun priests known here as *Ācāryas* that Sun worship came to be highly popular in eastern India. The early Sūrya images seldom fail to show the alien features like long tunic, waist-girdle and boots. However, gradual Indianisation of these traits and emphasis on Indian elements like lotus appear to have begun from the Gupta period. The beautifully-carved images of the Sun were dedicated and installed in temples. The late Purāṇas, specially the upa-Purāṇas[3], shed much light on the Sun cult of the early medieval period. After the Guptas, many dynasties of different parts of India patronized the Sun cult, perhaps for the kingly role of the Sun in heaven. Even the officers, merchants, scholars, fighters, cloth-weavers etc. became the votaries of the solar cult.[4]

It is evident that Sun worship began in India from a very early time and continued to gain popularity in different parts of India at different times. However, it is remarkable that in the eastern part of India, especially in Bengal and its adjoining areas, it became highly popular. In the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* (4th century B.C.), the Puṇḍras and Suhmas who were undoubtedly the inhabitants of Bengal, have been described as the Sun worshipping tribes. Quite a number of terracotta Sun images in the pre-Gupta times, even as early as the Maurya-Śuṅga period, have been found from lower Bengal. Numerous icons of the divinity belonging to the Gupta period have also been procured from various parts of the province. According to a tradition preserved among a section of the *Grahavipras* (Śākadvīpī), Śaśāṅka, the first in dependent king of Bengal,[5] brought twelve Brāhmaṇas living on the bank of the Sarayū for worshipping the Sun in order to treat an incurable disease which was, however, cured.[6] The Pāla kings, though Buddhists, were not hostile to Brāhmaṇical religion in any way; rather, they encouraged it in various ways. Dharmapāla is said to have claimed their descent from the solar race.[7] Sun images of the Pāla period have also been found in large numbers. The Sena kings were strong advocates of the orthodox Brāhmaṇical faith and helped it to attain the position of supremacy in Bengal. Sun worship continued in this period too. Number of the Sūrya images belonging to the Sena period is considerably large. Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena of the Sena dynasty were devout Sun worshippers. They call themselves *Paramasaura*, indicating the existence of a separate Sun-sect.

It is interesting to notice in this connection that the worship of the Sun became popular in early centuries in the territory of Kāmarūpa Prāgjyotiṣa. In the Gauhati Grant of Indrapāla, we have an expression *Āditya-bhaṭṭāraka,* which Hoernle takes to mean 'Holy Ādityas' (*i.e.* Sun god).[8] Among the ruins of Tezpur (6th century A.D.) are remnants, according to R.D. Banerjee, 'of a gigantic temple dedicated to Sun god'.[9] The prevalence of the Sun cult in the Prāgjyotiṣa can be noticed in the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and also in other texts. In connection with the *Sākkara vrata*, the *Sāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Saṁgraha*[10] ordains that the students should visit the sacred country of Prāgjyotiṣa before sunrise: *tato niṣkramya prāgjyotiṣaṁ puṇyadeśam = upagamya anudita*

Āditye. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[11] also refers to the Sun temple of Kāmarūpa. It is said that king Rājyavardhana, in order to have youthful vigour, was advised by the seers to propitiate the sun in a forest named Guru-visala frequented by *Siddhas*, in the very mountain – Kāmarūpa.

Tāranātha also mentions Sun worship in Assam. He refers to the fact that the people of Kāmarūpa were worshippers of the Sun prior to the advent of Buddhist monk Dhitika, who came there to convert them from Sun worship to Buddhism. In order to persuade the Sun worshippers to listen to him, Dhitika started to pretend that he was an envoy of Sun god.[12] The *Kālikā Purāṇa* mentions the Śrī Sūrya Mountain, which was the perpetual abode of the Sun god (*yatra deva āditya satataṁ sthitaḥ*) and refers to the *Citraśaila* or *Arvāk* hill where the Navagrahas were worshipped.[13] The *Arvāk* hill may stand for Sūrya Pāhār of Goalpara. The presence of a large number of Sun worshippers in the territory of Kāmarūpa in early centuries is interesting. It is likely that the Maga Brāhmaṇas who introduced the solar cult in north India including Bengal might have migrated farther east and took active part in propagating the sun cult in the territory of ancient Assam.

The popularity of Sun worship in early Bengal led to the proliferation of different types of Sun images. Temples were also dedicated to the Sun god. Inscriptions were carved with respectful reference to the divinity. Then these phenomena naturally pose certain questions. What is the secret of the continued popularity of Sun worship in ancient Bengal? Is it the fact that out of the three *Saura*-centres of India as referred to by the late Purāṇas, Muṇḍira that is believed to be the same as *Gaṅgāsāgara-saṁgama* (Southern Deltaic region) and Mandāra, one of the important images of Sūrya in India in Puṇyavardhan (Puṇḍra-vardhana)[14] played a significant role in spreading and popularizing the Sun cult all over the province? Sun god was regarded not only as the bestower of welfare and fulfiller of desire but also as *Samasta-rogānāṁ harttā* (healer of all diseases).[15] How far did the episode of Śaśāṅka, the first historical ruler of Bengal, as mentioned earlier, create a congenial atmosphere for popularization of the Solar cult in Bengal? To what extent did the tolerant policy of the Buddhist Pāla rulers towards the Brāhmaṇical religion help the Sun worship along with other principal cults like Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism in enjoying traditional supremacy? As said earlier, Sūryasena and Viśvarūpasena call themselves *Paramasaura* while *Paramamaheśvara* is applied to both Vijayasena and Vallālasena and *Paramavaiṣṇava* to Lakṣaṇasena. This poses a very pertinent question as to why the later Sena kings made such a remarkable departure from the religious affiliation of their predecessors.

A thorough investigation of all these questions will necessitate the proper understanding of the sociological significance of the proliferation of Sun images and Sun worship in this part of India. Besides the Sun temples at Muṇḍira, it is not unlikely to locate some areas of ancient *Saura-maṇḍala* in Varendra, which have yielded perhaps the largest number of Sun images. This again is possibly due to the presence of a sun sect, the existence of which can be traced from the time of the *Mahābhārata*, as postulated by Hopkins.[16] Again, it is no less interesting to notice that notwith standing the immense popularity of the Sun cult in the early medieval Bengal, it steadily receded to the background with the passage of time, leaving room to the other important Brāhmaṇical cults. Ultimately, it was relegated to the position of just one of the deities of the *Pañcopāsanā*, a *graha* of the *Navagrahas* and also to a folk religion. The medieval folk-literatures of Bengal like *Maṅgala-Kāvyas* also depict both Sūrya and Śiva as symbols of fertility cult. It is well known that Sun is very much connected with the productive system. At the same time, it is also associated with the fertility cult along with Śiva. The idea can be understood properly since the days when the sculptural representation like *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava*, the syncretistic form of Sūrya and Śiva, was visualized. It is interesting to note again in this connection that when the popularity of the Sun worship was on the wane perhaps since the last important ruler of the Sena dynasty known as Sūryasena and the ultimate dissolution of the Sena power in Bengal, Sun worship became the exclusive preserve of the peasantry and the womenfolk at large as the folk cult.

Notes and References

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Chapter - 2

SUN WORSHIP IN THE VEDIC LITERATURE

The worship of the Sun as a prominent deity was prevalent among almost all the ancient nations of the world, for the celestial luminary appealed greatly to their religious instincts. Sūrya was being worshipped in India from very early times. Vedic India had a vigorous tradition of Sun worship, which forms an integral part of Nature worship so prominently practiced by the Indo-Āryans. The Sun was worshipped under multiple names and forms in the Vedic tradition. Different Vedic Sun gods represent a special aspect of the Sun. Differences in functions, positions[1], aspects and times of daily worship of the Sun god as well as differences of tribes and families[2] among the Indo-Āryans and those of society and occupation[3] among the Āryans and non-Āryans appear to have contributed to the multiplication of names and forms of the Sun god. Sacrifices were offered to the Sun god in his various aspects under different names such as Sūrya, Savitṛ, Pūṣan, Bhaga, Vivasvat, Mitra and Viṣṇu, each personifying to a greater or lesser extent the different attributes of the Sun.

I

Sūrya

Sūrya represents primarily the round red orb of the Sun and hence is "the most concrete of the solar deities".[4] His connection with the visible luminary orb is very intimate in the *Ṛgveda*.[5] In the *Atharvaveda*, Sūrya looses that intimacy with nature and becomes primarily a great force of magic and medicine.[6] However, in the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads* and *Sūtras* the orb of the Sun is regularly worshipped.[7] In the *Ṛgveda*,[8] the singer wishes the rising Sun to declare him sinless to Mitra and Varuṇa. Kauṣītakī used to adore the Sun god for the removal of his sin.[9] In the *Sūtra* literature also, he is prayed particularly to deliver from sin.[10] Sūrya is also a great healing power, obviously because of the healing qualities of his rays. In the *Ṛgveda*, he is worshipped for the removal of jaundice as well as for the eyesight.[11] The healing aspect of Sūrya's personality was developed in fuller terms in the *Atharvaveda*. There he is prayed for a cure of yellowness of eyes, skin, teeth and nails as well as for a cure of the cough and pains of different kinds including that of heart and for the protection of the eyes.[12] In the *Brāhmaṇas*, he is intimately connected with the diseases of the eyes.[13] He is also invoked for granting long life.[14] The Sun is the giver of rain and heat.[15]

The Vedic seers also ascribed to Sūrya ideas higher than those of its material form did. In the *Ṛgveda*, the Sun is described as the soul of all movable and immovable things.[16] This tradition is repeated in the Vedic literature throughout.[17] In the *Brāhmaṇas, Āditya* is said to be the supreme essence of the deities and the soul of all the gods.[18] In the *Upaniṣads,* developed the concept of *Puruṣa* in the Sun, which is nothing but the formless ultimate reality while the Sun is the essence of the formed and actual reality.[19] Sūrya has been repeatedly identified with the universe in the later Vedic literature.[20]

He has also been conceived as the time.[21] In some Ṛgvedic hymns,[22] he is described as a celestial bird called '*Garutmān*' with beautiful wings (*divyaḥ suparṇa garutmān*) while in one verse[23] he is described as a white and brilliant horse brought by *Ūṣā*. He is more often described in the *Ṛgveda* as moving in a car "sometimes drawn by one, and at other times by several, four or seven, swift and ruddy horses or mares".[24] His rays were sometimes conceived as the seven horses of his chariot.[25] The benevolent nature of Sūrya is very much prominent in the *Ṛgveda* but the later Vedic period witnessed the development of his malevolent aspect too. Sūrya is the scorching Sun and is no other than the death.[26] If there occurs any default, Sūrya would burn down the sacrificers.[27]

Savitṛ

Savitṛ is "the stimulator of everything".[28] He is the spiritual power of the Sun and denotes his abstract qualities. The works of impulsion, vivification, instigation and stimulation are characteristically attributed to Savitṛ. He enlightens men and stimulates their thought.[29] In the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, he is often prayed for impulsion. *Atharvaveda*[30] describes him as the lord of stimulation. In the *Brāhmaṇas*, this quality of Savitṛ has been repeatedly and emphatically mentioned.[31] In the *Śrauta-* and the *Gṛhyasūtras,*[32] the impulse of the god finds very frequent mention. Other works such as bestowing of riches, purification of sin and protection from the evil are also attributed to him. Of course, these activities remain subservient to his main work of stimulation. He is intimately connected with the sacrifices in the Vedic tradition.[33] Like Sūrya, he is pre-eminently a golden deity. His eyes, arms, hands, tongue and hair are of gold; so are his armour, chariot and its pole. Therefore, Sāvitrī is not a mere abstract deity.

Savitṛ is connected with wisdom and intelligence.[34] He is prayed in some domestic rites for instilling of intelligence. The famous *Gāyatrī Mantra,*[35] known also as Savitṛ *Mantra*, which has been regarded as the valuable hymn to pay devotion to the Sun god and remained the sacred prayer of every devout Hindu for more than two thousand years, sheds much light on the nature and personality of Savitṛ. W. Jones renders it, "Let us adore the supremacy of that divine Sun, the godhead, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from who all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat".[36] According to Sāyaṇa, the hymn means: 'We mediate on the light which is one with Brahmā; his own light which, from its consuming influence on ignorance and its consequences, is termed *bhargas* and is that which is desirable, from its being to be known or worshipped by all (the property of the supreme being, the creator of the world and the animator through the abiding spirit of all creatures). Thus, the *Mantra* contains the belief that the solar light is the symbol of ultimate reality. It is enjoined in the *Brāhmaṇas* to employ this hymn in many rituals.[37] It is also utilized in the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* of the Atharvavedic tradition.[38] The *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads* have interpreted it in the highest metaphysical sense.[39] It finds mention in the *Sūtra* literature too.[40] In addition to the *Gāyatrī Mantra, Ṛgveda* associates *Savitṛ* with the highest metaphysical ideas elsewhere too. Savitṛ has been invoked as the supreme god, the creator and the preserver, and the regulator of all movable and immovable.[41] In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (3.12), he has been symbolically identified with the ultimate reality. These descriptions of Savitṛ later on contributed to the development of the Sun-sect by the sectarians.

In the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Sūtras*, Savitṛ is the chief deity in the initiation ceremony. Owing to his connection with stimulation, sacrifices and wisdom, the intelligentsia of the Vedic society[42] seemingly favoured him. In the later Vedic literature,[43] the intellectual classes, particularly the Brāhmaṇas, are frequently referred to as considering Savitṛ-worship by means of the *Gāyatrī* hymn as essential for spiritual upliftment. The oblations to Savitṛ are to be given at the house of a carver.[44]

Pūṣan

Pūṣan signifies the benevolent power of the Sun, manifested chiefly as a pastoral deity. He has been intimately connected with cattle and pastoral life in the *Ṛgveda*.[45] He is connected with the prosperity of cattle in the later Vedic literature too.[46] He takes care of cattle so that they may not be dashed to pieces in the ravine, brings them home safely, when they have gone astray, and in general, restores lost things. Pūṣan is intimately connected with paths in the *Ṛgveda*.[47] He is a guardian of the roads, which is a characteristic feature.[48] He knows the roadways and protects his devotees from dangers such as wolves and robbers. He is intimately connected with a particular class of people known as *Paṇis*[49] who were traders and most probably non-Āryans.[50] He has been asked to generate generosity in their hearts so that they become complacent towards the priests. He has a beard and braided hair. He travels in a chariot drawn by a goat[51] and he carries a golden spear, an awl, and a goad. His favourite food is *karambha* ("gruel"). He is connected with marriage in the wedding hymn.[52] He is invoked to lead the bride safely.[53] There is no growth of his personality in the later Vedic literature except his spiritualization in the *Upaniṣads*. The Bharadvājas are special priests of Pūṣan in the *Ṛgveda*. The oblations to Pūṣan are to be given at the house of a divider.[54]

Mitra

Mitra (Irānian Mithra) is identical with Mithra of the Indo-Irānian Sun god.[55] In the *Ṛgveda*, he is so closely associated with Varuṇa that he has virtually lost his independent stature. Only one hymn[56] is exclusively devoted to him, where it is stated that 'he brings men together by the utterance of his voice, and watches the tillers with unwinking eye'. According to MacDonnell,[57] the bringing of men together is a distinctive feature of Mitra in the Vedic literature. Ṛgvedic evidence points to Mitra as the representative of the beneficent aspect of the Sun as suggested by the name Mitra which originally meant "an ally". In the *Ṛgveda* (VII.62.4), he is mentioned as the dearest friend of the people. The later Vedic literature also refers to his friendly nature.[58]

He attains independence in the later Vedic literature. In the *Atharvaveda,* Mitra is represented as uncovering in the morning what has been covered by Varuṇa (IX.3.18). The *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* also directly refers to Mitra as the god of the day and Varuṇa as that of the night.[59] This view prevails in the *Brāhmaṇas* too. Sāyaṇa[60] and other commentators regarded Mitra as the presiding deity of the day as well. It is only in the later Vedic literature that Mitra appears as a god of concord and agreement.[61]

Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu is the most interesting of the different solar divinities, as he became one of the principal constituents of the composite god of the Vaiṣṇava religion. The main characteristic of his nature is his three steps. Exclusive epithets like *Urugāya* (wide going), *Urukrama* (wide going) and *Vikrama* meaning swift motion are applied to him several times in the Vedic literature. He is the personification of the swift-moving Sun.[62] Two of his steps are visible. However, the third or highest is invisible, far beyond the flight of birds, and is as an eye fixed in heaven, shining brightly down. It is the supreme power in the universe and three worlds are engulfed in it. Viṣṇu traverses three regions by his three strides.[63] This is a characteristic quality of him in the Vedic literature throughout.[64] Śākapūṇī, a predecessor of Yāska, regards these three strides as the course of the Sun through three divisions of the universe, earth, air and heaven.[65] Aurṇāvābha, another predecessor of Yāska (*Nirukta,* 12.19) takes them to mean the rising, the culminating and the setting of the Sun. Modern scholars like Max Müller, Keith, Wilson, Roth, MacDonnell and Kaegi favour the latter view. He took his three steps to protect the man in distress, to provide him a dwelling.[66] In the *Brāhmaṇas,* he is said to assume the dwarf form in order to help the god against the demons.[67]

Viṣṇu sets in motion, like a revolving wheel, his ninety steeds (days)[68] with their four names, 'an allusion probably to the three hundred and sixty days of the year divided into four seasons. It is significant to note that here Viṣṇu has been compared with *cakra,* the symbol of the Sun god, which became one of the prominent emblems of Viṣṇu in the later mythology. The most outstanding heroic deeds performed by Viṣṇu were two: firstly, he helped Indra with whom he is closely associated in the battle with Vṛtra, and secondly he took three strides in order to traverse the whole world.

Viṣṇu, from the very beginning, was popular among the Āryan masses as the god of productivity. So prominent is his quality as the great source of fertility, procreation and vegetation in the Vedic and the post-Vedic literature that many consider him primarily as the god of fertility. In the *Ṛgveda*, he is frequently invoked for bestowal of food.[69] The later Vedic literature also associate him with the food as well as plants.[70] In his invocation with other deities, he is invoked to promote conception.[71] He is invoked in the conception rite for laying the womb.[72] He is a protector of embryos. It is said in the later Vedic literature that he blesses his worshippers with children.[73] Thus, he is also a god of fertility and productivity and this, perhaps, accounts for his being called *Sipivista.*

Vivasvan

Vivasvan appears to have originally represented the rising Sun. He was also looked upon by the hymnists as the first sacrificer and the ancestor of the human race. He is the husband of Tvaṣṭṛ, the daughter of Tvaṣṭru, the architect of the gods. He is believed to protect one from Yama. The Vedic legend[74] about the marriage of Saraṇyu, the daughter of Tvaṣṭā, with Vivasvan was obviously the basis of the elaborate story current in the Epics, and the Paurāṇic story about Sūrya marrying Saṁjñā, the daughter of Viśvakarmā, her desertion of Sūrya after leaving with him her shadow (Chāyā) due to her inability to bear her husband's excessive brilliance and Viśvakarmā's attempt to reduce it in order that his daughter might endure it.

The Ādityas

Most of the deities mentioned above along with a few others like Amśa, Dakṣa, Dhātrī, Mārttaṇḍa, etc. came to constitute, in different groupings and different contexts, a special class of gods collectively known as the Ādityas, 'sons of Aditi', though Aditi was also looked upon as the mother of all the other Vedic divinities. Originally, six Ādityas are mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*: Mitra, Aryama, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Dakṣa and Aṁśa.[75] However, the number increased from six to seven by the entry of Sūrya and to eight by the inclusion of Mārttaṇḍa. Eight Ādityas also occur in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[76] the names of eight Ādityas are mentioned as Mitra, Varuṇa, Āryaman, Aṁśa, Bhaga, Dhātrī, Indra and Vivasvat. Owing to different traditions, there has been difference in the list of the Ādityas. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* at one place fixes their number at eight including Mārttaṇḍa, while in two other passages,[77] it raises the number to twelve and identifies them in this context with the twelve months. However, their names have not been enumerated. The identification of the Sun god with the Time is a marked feature of Sun worship of the later Vedic era. The Epics, Purāṇas and other later texts accept the number twelve. Many of the solar deities of the Vedic period are found here. Later, the worship of the twelve Ādityas along with that of the Navagrahas (the nine planets) came to occupy an important place in the religious life of the Hindus.

Mitra : Mitra, one of the Ādityas, has already been discussed.

Aryaman : Aryaman, also an Indo-Irānian deity, is a less defined aspect of Sūrya and so much destitute of individual traits that in the '*Naighaṇṭuka*' he is not included in the list of the gods. According to Wilson, Aryaman presides over twilight.[78] He is described as the animator of humankind.[79]

His friendly nature is referred to in the *Ṛgveda*[80] and finds mention in the *Atharvaveda* too.[81] Thus, the conception of Aryaman seems to have differed but little from that of the greater Āditya, Mitra. Aryaman, which means chivalry, is the chief of *Pitṛs.*

Bhaga : According to Yāska,[82] Bhaga is the presiding deity of the forenoon. However, its association with the Sun is not very clear. The name means 'dispenser' or 'giver' and is of Indo-European origin. He is also regularly conceived in the Vedic hymns as 'a distributor of wealth' usually the gift of Indra and Agni, the chief leader of rites[83] and the sustainer of the world.[84]

Aṁśa : Aṁśa has also no individual personality. He is almost synonymous with Bhaga, expressing both the concrete sense of 'share, portion' and that of apportioner'.

Dakṣa : Dakṣa was considered with Aditi as the universal parent representing the luminous sky.[85] It fits in with his description in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[86] as Prajāpati.

Varuṇa : Varuṇa is described as a 'very wise son of Aditi'[87] and the chief of the Ādityas in the Vedic literature. Mostly, he is described and invoked along with Mitra, and only sometimes with other gods. He seems to represent the luminous encompassing sky.[88] Sāyaṇa,[89] the well-known commentator of the Vedas, however, remarks that the setting Sun alone is called Varuṇa. He causes the night by his departure.

Sūrya : Sūrya — the seventh Āditya has already been described.

Mārttaṇḍa : *Mārttaṇḍa*, the eighth Āditya has almost no individual feature. It is only said of him that he was born from a dead egg and was thrown away by Aditi. He is mentioned just as a name of the Sun god in the later Vedic literature.[90] It is suggested by MacDonnell that he is a representative of the setting Sun.[91]

Aśvins : The character of these two deities, always mentioned in one name Aśvins, is not well defined. The most marked feature is that the Aśvins are twins and inseparable generally.[92] Yāska takes the Aśvins to be the twilight before dawn: half-dark, half-light. However, he has also quoted alternative views of his predecessors.[93] Some considered them as the heaven and earth, others as the day and night and some others as the Sun and the moon while the legendary writers or writers of history regarded them as two kings, performers of holy acts. However, their solar character is affirmed by their connection with ūṣā (Dawn), Sūrya and Vivasvat. ūṣā who is probably their sister comes in their wake. Sūryā,[94] daughter of Sūrya, is their wife and accompanies them on their car. The car of the Aśvins is golden or Sun-like[95] in all its various parts and traverses heaven and earth in a single day as the cars of the Sun and ūṣā are also said to do. They are the sons of Vivasvat and Saraṇyū, daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ.[96]

The attributes '*rudravartanī*' (having a red path) and '*hiraṇyavartanī*' (golden pathed) are peculiar to the Aśvins. They reveal the light aspect of the Aśvins' personality. The close connection of the Aśvins with horses as their name as well as other connections is again a pointer in the same direction. They appear in the early dawn[97] when they yoke their horses to their car and descend to earth to receive the adorations and offerings of their votaries.

The Aśvins are connected with marriage, production and love.[98] They are invoked along with several other gods to bestow fertility on the bride.[99] They gave the wife of a eunuch a child and made the barren cow yield milk.[100] They are responsible for the rain so essential for the fertility of the vegetative world.[101] They are divine physicians with several Ṛgvedic legends of miraculous cures to their credit. These legends illustrate their role as the physicians for diseases such as blindness in the main or restoring youthful vigour, helping young maiden in production and works connected with procreative potency. In the later Vedic literature also, they are the physicians restoring the eyesight and other diseases.[102] In the *Upaniṣad*, the Aśvins are mentioned sparingly but wherever they find reference is in connection with the procreation.[103] The character of charioteers attributed to them in the *Ṛgveda* is maintained in the later Vedic literature. There is a reference in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* to the effect that the oblations for the Aśvins should be offered in the house of the charioteer.[104]

In the later Vedic literature, it is found that the position of the Aśvins came to be degraded and the orthodox circles looked down upon them. The *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* mentions that at the beginning, the Aśvins did not drink *Soma* and it was later that they acquired the habit of drinking *Soma.* A bad *Brāhmaṇa* who desires to drink *Soma* offers prayer to them. In a similar way, the *Brāhmaṇas* inform that the deities did not invite them at the sacrifice as they mixed with the human beings too much. The position of the Aśvins declined in the later Vedic age probably because of too much emphasis on their fertility aspect. The orthodox circles regarded this field as a private and closed book and therefore, did not like this aspect of them, which came to be more prominent in the post-Vedic era.

II

The Sun was also adored in theriomorphic, fetishistic and symbolic forms in the Vedic period. These aspects were, however, not very important.

Behind the anthropomorphic forms of some solar gods, probably there may have been some animals. The Aśvins seem to have the horses, Pūṣan the goats and Viṣṇu the bird in the background of their personalities.[105] In addition to these identifications of the Sun gods with the animals, there were a variety of animal-fetishes of the solar deities in the Vedic worship. These fetishes, no doubt, played a minor role.

The horse in general is a symbol of the Sun god. This becomes evident from his several descriptions in the *Ṛgveda* [106] and in the later Vedic literature.[107] It is said that the dawn leads a white steed.[108] The *Brāhmaṇas* have directly identified the Sun with the horse.[109] In the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, horse was employed as the symbol of the Sun as the lord of the heaven.[110] The bull is another symbol of the Sun god in the Vedic literature. Sūrya has been called a bull in the *Ṛgveda.*[111] In the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[112] and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,*[113] the Sun has again been described as the bull. In many

Atharvavedic rites, the bull used to be employed as the symbol of the Sun god.[114] The bull represents the procreative potency of the Sun.[115] The goat appears to have been another animal-fetish of the Sun god. According to MacDonnell, Pūṣan was specially associated with the goat. The bird in general was also symbolic of the Sun god due to its fast speed. Frequent comparison is found in the *Ṛgveda*[116] between the Sun and a few birds such as an eagle, a swan, a falcon etc. The Sun has been referred to a number of times as a particular bird '*Suparṇa-Garutmat*' (probably a mythical bird) or simply *Suparṇa*. In the later Vedic literature also, such descriptions occur.

Besides animals, various material objects were also employed in the Vedic times to symbolize the Sun god. The wheel served as a well-liked symbol of the Sun god. It represented both the shape and motion of the Sun.[117] The wheels of the Sun's car are too often referred to in the *Ṛgveda*.[118] The wheel was also frequently used as a symbol representing the Sun in the Vedic rituals[119] such as the *Vājapeya* sacrifice or the ritual of laying the sacrificial fire or the solstice-festival. A golden disc as well as simple gold was also employed to symbolize the Sun god in the Vedic ritual.[120] The practice might have originated in the Ṛgvedic age. In the Vedic rituals, a gold plate served as the symbol of the Sun.[121] In various rituals, simply the gold was employed to represent the Sun god.[122] A firebrand was also utilized as a symbol of the Sun.[123]

The lotus also served in the Vedic rituals[124] as a symbol of the Sun probably in his fertility aspect. Lotus appear's to be connected with the Sun in the *Atharvaveda*.[125] A circular white hide also symbolizes of the Sun god.[126] The white colour, sacred to the Sun god, also served as his symbol. Generally, a white horse[127], a white cow[128], or a white round skin[129] is used to represent the Sun.

Material objects like the wheel, the disc, the lotus etc. that served as symbols of the Sun god in the Vedic rituals are found on numerous early coins,[130] some of which may be dated in the later Vedic age.[131] These representations might have been encouraged by the Vedic tradition. These material objects symbolized the Sun god only during their employment in the rituals and therefore, they tend to command importance as ritual components than as icons. However, they may be taken to be the precursor of later images. The general trend of the Vedic society as indicated in the Vedic literature seems to be aniconic.[132] The aniconic tradition of the *Ṛgveda* goes on in the later Vedic period too. However, it is evident from the use of symbols as Sun-fetishes in the Vedic rituals that the tradition of the worship of the Sun has moved forward from the purely aniconic tradition to the semi-iconic phase as these *vimbas* or *Sandris pratikṛti* served as temporary icons of the Sun in unconventional sense. Not only iconic tradition but also public worship by means of temples could not be developed. One thing should, however, be mentioned here. Sun in human form has been found represented on the Mauryan pottery[133] and actual specimen of the Sun-images of the first or second century B.C.[134] has been discovered as well. Therefore, it is not unnatural to suggest that by the last part of the *Sūtra* period the tradition of image making and worship was prevalent among a section of the people most probably outside the Vedic circle.

III

The adoration of the Sun under one name or other is important and essential in all the social and religious rites and ceremonies of the Vedic society. It shows that Sun worship was popular among the people in Vedic India. The ceremonies where the worship of the Sun was integral are the following:

The Sun is worshipped at different occasions in the marriage ceremony. Pūṣan is prayed to lead the bride safely.[135] Mitra, Viṣṇu and Sūrya along with other gods are invoked to protect the couple.[136] After marriage, on the fourth night towards the morning the husband offers oblations with prayers to the Sun for expiation.[137]

In the initiation ceremony, Sun god plays a far more important role. The recitation of the *Gāyatrī* hymn is the most important part of the ceremony[138] Sūrya is prayed for bestowal of insight and radiance on the student.[139] When the charge of the student is given to the Sun, he is to be worshipped.[140] When the teacher takes charge of the student, many solar deities are invoked.[141] The worship of the Sun is to be done when the studentship ends.[142]

The worship of the Sun is prescribed in all the *saṁskāras.* In the *Keśānta* and *Cūḍākarman* ceremonies, Savitṛ is invoked.[143] The recitation of the hymn sacred to the Sun is prescribed for a valiant male child.[144] The child in his fourth month is made to look to the Sun while the adoration to the Sun continues by means of the muttering of the hymn.[145]

The role of the Sun god is important in the daily life too. In a few *Gṛhyasūtras,* every householder is enjoined to offer oblations to the Sun god daily in the morning.[146] In case someone sees a bad dream,[147] rises after the sun-rise,[148] falls in some danger[149] or desires to win co-wives,[150] the worship of the Sun is to be done. Every twice-born householder is to perform the *Sandhyopāsanā*, a form of the Sun worship. The Morning Prayer along with the muttering of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and facing towards the east should begin before the Sunrise and goes on until the disc of the Sun is on the horizon. The evening prayer commences by facing the north-east along with muttering of the *Gāyatrī* when the solar disc is about to set and it continues till the stars appear in the sky.[151] Offer of an *arghya* to the Sun is also prescribed.[152] As the *Sandhyā* was to be done according to the procedure laid down in the *Gṛhyasūtras* and *Dharmasūtras* daily by every twice-born Hindu,[153] it may be said that Sun-worship in its spiritualized form was a very important feature of social life.

In various seasonal ceremonies and festivals, Sun god figures prominently. At the partaking of the first fruits of the harvest[154] as well as in the house-building ceremony,[155] the Sun is worshipped. In many agricultural festivals[156] and in the funeral ceremony, the Sun is also worshipped by means of reciting the hymn propitiatory to the him.[157] An *Āditya-vrata* prescribed for a student is referred to in the *Gobhila Gṣhyasūtra.*[158] In addition to the common people, the aristocratic circles of the Vedic society also worshipped the solar deities. This is evident from the worship of the Sun in the *Agnicayana* and *Agnihotra*, employment of the solar symbolism in the *Aśvamedha* and the *Vājapeya* sacrifices as well as in the ceremony for the setting up of the sacred fires, places of the Sun gods given in the *Soma* sacrifices and offering of libations to Pūṣan, Savitṛ and Sūrya in the seasonal sacrifices.[159] It was beyond doubt that the Sun was not worshipped independently outside the institution of *Yajña.*

Method of Worship

The Sun, like other deities, was worshipped through the recitation of the hymns and the offerings.[160] The recitation of hymns was essential in the Vedic worship. The hymns were of two types: the prayer and the praise. There are internal evidences in the *Ṛgveda* and the later Vedic literature in favour of this. The recitation of hymns sacred to the Sun is also referred to in the *Brāhmaṇas,* the *śrauta-*and the *Gṛhyasūtras.*[161] It is said in the *Sūtras* that the hymns were to be murmured and not recited. This practice was called *japa.* There are many references in the *Gṛhyasūtras* to the *japa* of hymns for the Sun worship. The procedures of Sun worship may be known from the study of the constituents of the *Sandhyopāsanā,* which is a type of Sun worship. Those constituents were *japa* (the muttering of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*), the *arghya,* the *ācamana* (cleansing the mouth), the *prāṇāyāma* (the inhalation and exhalation of the air), the *mārjana,* the *aghamarṣaṇa* and the *upasthāna.*[162] Emphasis is laid on the *japa* in the *Gṛhyasūtras* but in the *Dharmasūtras* elaborate rules have been evolved for other elements.[163] As the *Sandhyopāsanā* was the ideal worship for every twice born householder, it may be suggested that the general worship of the Sun god necessitated these procedures as well.

The offerings consisted either of the oblations or of the libations. The oblations consisted of clarified butter poured on fire while the libation was that of the *Soma* juice in the fire, on the ground or on the sacred grass strewn on the floor. The libation of *Soma* juice was an essential part of the Vedic ritual and all the solar deities were connected with it. References are found in the Vedic literature of the oblations of clarified butter to the Sun gods.[164] Salutations are offered and meditations are addressed to Sūrya[165] and Savitṛ.[166] It is enjoined that the horses of the Sun are also to be salutated.[167] Meditation devoted to the Sun also finds frequent mention in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (II.9). Beholding of the light of Sūrya is also prescribed. According to the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (I.2), the worshippers are supposed to gaze on the solar orb. The worship of the Sun was essentially domestic, as the entire ceremony was performed in the house of the worshippers. It was non-sectarian too, as various deities were simultaneously invoked and many of them in turn were praised as the supreme deities. No reference is made to any temple or any place of community-worship in the early Vedic literature.

Worship of the Sun is prescribed for once (in the morning), twice (in the morning and the evening) or thrice (at the dawn, the noon and the evening) in a day. Three occasions of Sun worship are indicated even in the *Ṛgveda.* According to *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,* the hymns sacred to the Sun god should be recited in keeping with his movement. Sun worship for twice a day (in the morning and in the evening) is mentioned in *Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇa.*[168] Three occasions of Sun worship is referred to in the *Upaniṣads* as well. Kauśītaki used to adore the Sun in the morning, at midday and in the evening.[169] Worship of the Sun as the symbol of *Brahman* is also prescribed at seven different times of the day.[170] These seven times are as follows: the pre-rise, the post-rise, the cow-gathering, the mid-day, the past mid-day, past afternoon and the post-sunset. It seems that in the beginning, the *Sandhyopāsanā* used to be performed twice — in the morning and in the evening,[171] but later, it was to be done for three times — the morning, the noon and the evening.[172]

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Chapter - 3

SUN WORSHIP IN THE EPIC AND THE PAURĀṆIC LITERATURE

I

The post-Vedic period was characterized by the growth of sects and sectarian ideologies because of the resurgence of non-Āryan indigenous traditions and growth of the *bhakti* movement. The religious life of the Epics,[1] therefore, came to be dominated by sectarianism. In keeping with the changed ambiance, the Sun cult also underwent conspicuous changes in its concept of the divinity and its ritual. The Sun came to be one of the few important deities of the Epics who had a sectarian following.[2]

A Sun-sect known as *Sauras* finds specific reference for the first time in the *Mahābhārata*. It is said that in the camp of the Pāṇḍus, there were a thousand and eight others who were Sun worshippers.[3] In the said Epic, there is a hymn[4] in praise of the Sun god having 108 names, which was finally communicated to Yudhiṣṭhira by Dhaumya.[5] All the characteristic features of a sectarian divinity can be traced in this legend of Sun worship by Yudhiṣṭhira. He is the highest god, the lord of Manus and Manvantaras.[6] In the list of 108 names, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Skanda, Yama, Varuṇa, Indra, and Soma etc. are just other names of the Sun god that demonstrates his supremacy. In all the seven worlds, there is none who can surpass him.[7] His names such as Aja, Kāla, Ādideva, Carācarātmā, Sukṣātmā and Viśvakarmā point to his superiority and recognition with the highest metaphysical principle of the cosmos. In this context, mention is also made of the grace of the god and submission to him. This shows that the Sun god was a deity of a sect and the flow of *bhakti* was flooding the naturalistic concept of the Vedic tradition of the Sun god. In the legend of Karṇa, there are references to the *bhaktas* of the Sun god.[8] In the same way, the legends of Samvarṇa[9] represents Vaśiṣṭha as praying to the Sun god in a sectarian manner. He is the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution. In the *Āditya-hṛdaya Mantra* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[10] the Sun god has been identified with all the great divinities in the typical sectarian way. He is the lord of even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa.[11] He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all creatures.[12] The development of sectarian texts, which is a fundamental feature of a sect, is also traceable in the Epics. 'A secret *Veda* of the Sun' has been specially mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* that was taught to Arvāvasu.[13]

It is, therefore evident that the *Sauras* developed a *Veda* of their own that was different from the traditional Vedas. The sectarian following of the Sun god may also be traced in some of the names of historical celebrities in the *Mahābhārata*. Such names are Sūryadhvaja, Rocamāna, Aṁsumāna[14] and Sūryadatta. In ancient India, many persons used to take the name of their god because of intense devotion to him.[15] Thus, we find in the Epics the march of Sun worship towards sectarianism from the non-exclusive and naturalistic tradition of the Vedic period. But it took some centuries more for the establishment of its popularity and practices in the religious realm of the people. The solar sect seems to have been ideologically connected with the Vedic thoughts. It is said that the Sun worshippers in the camp of the Pāṇḍus were experts in the Vedic lore.[16] Names such as Sūrya, Savitā, Pūṣa, Bhaga, Aryaman, Tvaṣṭā, Vivasvan, etc. in the list of 108 names are Vedic survivals in the Epic pantheon. The method of Sun worship in the Epics is also in many ways a survival of the Vedic tradition. The *japa* and other constituents of the ritual such as the *ācamana*, the *prāṇāyāma*, the *upasthāna*, the *arghya*, etc. are mentioned in them.[17] In the *Rāmāyaṇa,* a class of worshippers is referred to as worshipping the Sun by means of the *upasthāna* with their arms upstretched.[18] Similarly, Samvarṇa adored the Sun god by asceticism with face towards the Sun.[19] His descriptions as the soul of the universe,[20] the Time and the rain-giver are continuations of the Vedic tradition.

The solar sect seems to have been developed by the indigenous traditions of *bhakti*. It is said that various non-Āryan tribes such as Siddhas, the Cāraṇas, the Gandharvas, the Yakṣas, the Guhyakas, the Nāgas, the Asuras and the Rākṣasas adored the Sun.[21] *Bhakti* finds direct mention several times in the *Mahābhārata* in connection with the Sun worship. He is adored by means of *dhūpa*, *dīpa* and *naivedya*. The worship of the Sun god in the Epics integrated the indigenous traditions of *bhakti* and *pūjā* along with the Vedic tradition.

The *Mahābhārata* appears to have been familiar with the fire-Sun-worshipping Maga priests from Śākadvīpa, the advent of whom marked the beginning of new traditions in solar cult.[22] They are mentioned for the first time in this work. Reference is also made to the four castes of Śākadvīpa one of which is the Magas — the Fire-worshipping priests.[23] The Irānian tradition of Sun worship seems to have had its impact on the solar sect of the Epics. Mihira — the Magian Sun god has been explicitly referred to in the *Mahābhārata* as one of the names of the deity and distinguished from its Indian counterpart — Mitra in the same line.[24] In addition, the Magian tradition of providing boots etc. to the Sun images seems to have been mentioned in the legend of Jamadagni referring to the offer of umbrella and boots to him by Sūrya.[25] It is evident that the *Mahābhārata* was familiar with the Magian tradition. However, there is no significant influence of it in the Sun worship in the *Mahābhārata* except in the adoption of the name of Mihira and a few legends like those of Jamadagni and Māṭhara. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, there is no reference to Mihira or the Magas in the *Āditya-hṛdaya* hymn. The patronage extended by the foreign rulers[26] like Kaniṣka, Mihirkula, etc. might have contributed to this trend too.

The personality of Sūrya has been fully humanized in the Epics.[27] However, he is

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still described as a disc, a bird, a horse, or a bull.[28] In the *Mahābhārata,* the Sun appears in human form in connection with the legends of Arvāvasu, Karṇa, Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira and Jamadagni.[29] The Sun was allegedly present in human form when Agastya instructed Rāma to recite *Āditya-hṛdaya* hymn.[30] He possesses hands, hair etc., drinks, makes speeches, gives knowledge, acts as witness and goes home.[31]

In keeping with the humanization of the Sun's personality, there also developed a family round him. Tvaṣṭṛ, daughter of Tvaṣṭā and also known as Saṁjñā and Saraṇyū, is the wife of Vivasvat.[32] Suvarcalā is also mentioned as a devoted consort of him. Chāyā, the shadow of Saraṇyū, though not referred to in the Epic proper, finds specific mention in the Harivaṁśa as the wife of Sūrya. Aśvins are his sons by Tvaṣṭṛ,[33] and Śaniścara by Chāyā. Karṇa, and Yama are also his children.[34] In addition, Sūrya had also a few other sons. Suprajā, Śraddhā Vaivasvatī and Sāvitrī are referred to as his daughters.[35] Most probably some of his family-members such as Aśvinī-kumāras (Dasra and Nāsatyas)[36] came to be invoked along with him. Aruṇa is the charioteer of Sūrya.[37] Aruṇa, Māṭhara and Daṇḍa are referred to as his attendants and worshipped along with the Sun.[38]

The Epics refer to several old Sun gods such as Sūrya, Savitṛ, Mitra, Pūṣan, Aśvins, Vivasvat, Viṣṇu, Bhaga and Tvaṣṭā.[39] However, these once-separate gods are now considered just as different names and forms of the Sun. Vibhāvasu came to be common name in the Epics.[40] *Ādityas,* sons of Aditi, are also referred to in the *Mahābhārata.* According to the scholars, they are twelve in number.[41] In accordance with a list of the *Mahābhārata,* the twelve *Āditya*s are Dhātā, Mitra, Aryaman, Indra, Varuṇa, Aṁśa, Bhaga, Vivasvan, Pūṣā, Savitā, Tvaṣṭā, and Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, though youngest, is said to be the greatest of the *Āditya* because of his qualities.[42] The twelve *Ādityas* have been identified with the twelve months of the year in the Epics too.[43] It is clear that the Epics were following the tradition of the *Brāhmaṇas* in respect of the *Ādityas.* The only difference is that Viṣṇu emerges here as the chief of the *Ādityas.* Under the name of Sūrya or *Āditya,* the once-separated solar deities were merged into one Sun god though his different aspects were represented by different old names and new synonyms and epithets. The coming out of the Sun in *Āditya* or Sūrya as the Supreme and original solar divinity marks an exit from the past and may be considered as the Epic innovation.

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The primary function of the Sun god is to drive away darkness and demons.[44] More prominent than his day-maker aspect is his role as the rain-giver and the corn-producer. It is said that he draws up waters for eight months during his northern course and in the remaining four months, he pours them down in the form of rain during his southern course.[45]. From the combination of heat and water, the plants and corns are produced. Thus, the Sun is ultimately responsible for the production of food on which men subsist.[46] That is why the food has been described as a form of Sūrya. Yudhiṣṭhira prayed to him specifically for food, which he gave to him for twelve years.[47] The rain-giving aspect of Sūrya is not fully developed in the Vedic tradition though it is known. However, in the Epics this aspect is quite frequently emphasized and was taken up later on by the Purāṇas.

He is identified with Time in an equal manner. This becomes evident from his names such as *Kāla, Samvatsarakara, Kālacakrapravartaka, Kālādhakṣya* and *Kṣaṇa.*[48] The twelve *Ādityas* who are regular Sun gods in the Epics are identified with the twelfth months of the year.[49] He is the lord of the planets[50] and also identical with all the planets.[51] Thus, the tradition of worshipping Sūrya in association with *Navagrahas* was initiated in the Epics.

In the Epics, the benevolent qualities of the Sun god are expressed by such epithets as *Maitreya, Karuṇānvita, Dhanvantari, Jīvana, Kāmada* and *Prāṇadhāraka.*[52] However, the role of the Sun as a malevolent deity is also emphasized in both the Epics. He is the destroyer of the universe[53] and an evil planet.[54] Probably, the oppressive heat of northern India, where the Epics were composed, had contributed towards this feature. The Sun god is a great moral and ethical force in the Epics. He is the beholder of good and bad deeds of men.[55] The identity of the worshipper and the worshipped is repeated when it is said that the saint approaches to enter his disc at which Vivasvat welcomes him. The glory of the saint and the glory of the Sun becomes one.[56]

The recitation of hymns sacred to the Sun god formed an essential feature of the Epic worship too. Yudhiṣṭhira worshipped the Sun by repeating hymns containing 108 names of the divinity as well as by hymns of praise and prayer.[57] Karṇa resorted to the method of *japa* of hymns propitiatory to the Sun god. In the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Rāma invokes the Sun by the *japa* of the *Āditya-hṛdaya* hymn.[58] Besides the *japa,* others constituents of the ritual are the *ācamana,* the *prāṇāyāma,* the *upasthāna* etc.[59] The concentration and purity of mind and observance of vows involving complete fasting also constituted the ritual of Sun worship as Yudhiṣṭhira lived on air only while adoring the Sun god with devoted mind.[60] There is a reference in the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the *munis* who observe difficult vows such as worshipping the Sun god by means of the *upasthāna* with their arms up stretched.[61] Similarly in the *Mahābhārata,* Samvaraṇa worshipped the Sun god by asceticism with face towards the Sun. Kuntī invoked the Sun by the power of a magic formula. The posture at the time of the worship used to be standing with face towards the Sun.[62] The salutation[63] to the Sun god is a frequent theme in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa.* However, the *japa* of the Epic tradition is slightly different from that of the Vedic ritual. In the *japa* of the Epics, exclusive emphasis was laid upon the names of the deity while in the Vedic school the repetition was of full hymn containing praise and prayer.

Departures that are more significant may be seen in the employment of flowers, incense, garlands, lamps etc. in Sun worship in the Epics.[64] It is already mentioned that Sun god was completely anthropomorphized and he used to appear in human form before the worshipper. However, there is no specific mention of any image of the Sun god in the Epics.[65] On the other hand, usual images of the Sun dating as early as the second century B.C.[66] are found. Further, terracotta-containing figures of the Sun of still earlier period, *i.e.* Maurya-Śuṅga period are available.[67] Therefore, it can be said that the tradition of Sun worship by means of images was known the Epic society[68] but it was not a popular creed, as it is not directly mentioned. The worship of the Sun was done at two *sandhyās* and seventh and sixth days were especially auspicious for his worship.[69]

In reality, the Epics continue Sun worship of the Vedic tradition along with the adaptation of non-Āryan and popular trends of the solar cult. In the Epics, Sun worship assumed greater proportions and a sect came to be developed round him. The solar sect is purely indigenous in nature though the Epics are aware of the Magian tradition. Further, in the Epics, the Sun god witnessed a free and full humanization and there emerged a fully developed family round him. He has been associated with various legends in which may be traced the origin of the conception of halo and high boots, the latter under the Irānian influence. In spite of various names of the Sun god, there is a tendency to regard these once-separate solar gods as different names and forms of one Sun god. There are many traits of Vedic origin in Sun's personality while others presage Paurāṇic trends of solar worship.

II

The Purāṇas present a composite religion, in which are blended the Vedic tradition of sacrificial religion, the semi-Vedic stream of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other unorthodox cults and the non-Vedic thought of Śāktism and Tāntricism.[70] Broadly speaking, there are two main stages in the development of the composite religion.[71] Firstly, in the early Paurāṇic works the Vedic and the *Smārta* traditions have been given prominence though the semi-Vedic thought of *bhakti, pūjā, vrata, tīrtha* etc. are also casually mentioned. Secondly, in the later Purāṇas, which originate from the 5th-6th centuries A.D. emphasis is laid upon the glorification of the semi-Vedic and even non-Vedic divinities in a sectarian fashion. The prevalence of *bhakti, pūjā, vrata, tīrtha,* the worship of images in temples and the influence of Tāntricism are special characteristics of this stage.[72]

It is usually believed that a tradition of solar worship was in practice in the Vedic period and an indigenous school of Sun worshipper possibly existed from the pre-Āryan times. From the first century A.D. onwards,[73] a foreign tradition of Sun worship appears to have been quite popular in the society. After the downfall of the Vedic system and the prevalence of a foreign tradition of Sun cult, the indigenous thought of solar cult[74] really presented a sort of challenge to orthodox Sun worshippers. In response, they composed this system of composite Sun cult, which are found in many early and late Purāṇas.

III

The earlier Purāṇas carry on the Vedic and *Smārta* traditions of solar worship, though minor changes and additions are found in keeping with the changed conditions. The atmospheric aspect of the Sun as seen in the Vedic literature continues to be adhered to. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* the Sun appears as the chief of the planetary system.[75] His descriptions as the arranger of the day, night, seasons etc. show his atmospheric aspect.[76] He is worshipped by the *Gāyatrī* and nobody should neglect the *Sandhyopāsanā.*[77] According to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* he abides in the *Veda* and his self is Vedic.[78] He dwells in the sky.[79] His first form is luminous and can hardly be gazed upon because of its circle of splendour.[80] The concept of the twelve *Ādityas* as the twelve months of the year is popular in the early Purāṇas,[81] which is also Vedic in origin. Constituents of the solar ritual such as the *arghya,* the *ācamana,* the *japa,* the *sandhyopāsanā*[82] etc. are also Vedic survivals. References to sacrificial oblations to the Sun god are occasionally found in the early Purāṇas.[83] All these are indicative of the fact that in the Sun cult of the early Purāṇas, the Vedic tradition was given a prominent place, though non-Vedic elements such as sectarianism, *bhakti, pūjā* etc. are also traceable therein.

Epic sectarianism had its impact upon the early Paurāṇic world. The legends of Yājñavalkya,[84] Satrājit,[85] Brahmā,[86] Aditi[87] and Rājyavardhana[88] reveal the acquaintance of the early Purāṇas with the ideologies of a Sun sect. Most probably, this trend was inspired and nourished by the non-Āryan tradition. Significantly, the picture of solar sectarianism drawn based on early Paurāṇic accounts is corroborated by the Gupta inscriptions[89] and iconography. Many Sun images of the Gupta period had been found from all over northern India[90] that clearly demonstrate that Sun worship had developed itself into a cult-form.

In the early Purāṇas, Āditya appear as the most popular name of the Sun. In the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas,* this term is enumerated along with other names of Sūrya.[91] In the *Matsya Purāṇa,* prayer is given to the Sun god under the name of *Āditya.*[92] Yājñavalkya invoked the Sun god in the name of Āditya too. The emergence of Āditya as the popular name of the Sun is really an achievement of the Epic-Purāṇa tradition, because the etymological derivation of Āditya in the Purāṇas is based upon the semantic principles[93] while in the Vedas it was derived from the name of their mother – *Aditi.*[94] The Āditya*s* represent a group of Sun gods in the early Purāṇas. Generally, their number has come to be fixed as twelve. In many early Purāṇas,[95] the list of the names of these twelve Ādityas is given. A comparative study of these lists[96] will reveal that Viṣṇu, Indra, Dhātā, Tvaṣṭā, Pūṣā, Vivasvan, Mitra, Varuṇa, Aṁśa (its variants are Aṁśu, Aṁśumān) and Bhaga are common to all lists. The other two Ādityas are taken among from these Sun gods — Savitā, Aryaman, Parjanya, Yama, Viṣṇu and Indra. One significant omission in these lists is Mārttaṇḍa. However, he finds a definite mention as a Sun god in the *Matsya Purāṇa.*[97] The twelve Ādityas reside in the *Sūrya-maṇḍala*[98] and are identified with the twelve months of the year. The concept of the Ādityas as the Time is more prominent than their being simply the Sun gods.

Many Ādityas such as Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, Savitā, Aryaman, Vivasvān and Bhaga are invoked independently of this group. Savitṛ, Bhāskara, Sūrya, Vivasvat and Āditya are some of the names of the Sun god[99] under whom Yājñavalkya prayed him.[100] In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* the names of the Sun deity are mentioned as Āditya, Bhāskara, Bhānu, Savitṛ, Divākara, Pūṣan, Aryamā and Svarabhānu. In all these references, we do not find the name of Mihira — the Irānian name of the Sun god — most probably due to the orthodoxy of the early Paurāṇic world.

It is mainly the benevolent aspect of the Sun god, which is worshipped in the early Paurāṇic period.[101] He draws water for the eight months and pours them down during the next four months. Due to the rain and heat produced by the Sun, the corn grows and the world subsists. Therefore, he is called *Jīvana* and *Brahmasatkṛta*.[99] As noticed earlier in representing the Sun in the Epic period, we again come across the story relating to the Sun as the source of *Jīvana* and *Brahmasatkṛa*. He is responsible for long life as is revealed by the legend of Rājyavardhana found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.[103] The malevolent aspect of the Sun also finds mention in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* . To avoid the creation-destroying, fiery glory of the Sun, Brahmā prayed to him and persuaded him to contract his supreme glory.[104] Viśvakarmā's paring of the Sun's rays[105] probably symbolizes the curtailment of the excessive heat and the destructive power of the Sun as well. The emphasis was laid upon the benevolent aspect of the Sun in the early Paurāṇas because the Paurāṇic religion centered round the concept of a loving god whose grace is sought for by the devotees.[106]

There is also a development in his personality towards humanization in the early Pūraṇas. The legends of Satrājit,[107] Aditi,[108] Yājñavalkya[109] and Rājyavardhana[110] are important in this regard. In all these legends, the Sun appeared at first in his natural form. However, he displayed his human form when the worshipper requested for the same. With humanization, there emerged a family round the Sun god. In the early Purāṇas, the story of Saṁjñā and her shadow Chāyā as wives of Sūrya is referred to.[111] Sūrya has many children —Yama, Manu and Yamī by Saṁjñā; two Aśvins — Dasra and Nāsatya and Revanta from Saṁjñā in mare's form ; Manu, Śanaiścara and Tapatī from Chāyā. In some late passages of the early Purāṇas,[112] the attendants of the Sun god — Daṇḍa and Piṅgala — also find mention.

From the references to human form of the Sun it appears that the early Purāṇas were aware of the iconic tradition of the Sun god that was in vogue in the contemporary society.[113] However, no direct reference occur to the image of the Sun in them. Some passages of the *Vāyu*, the *Matsya* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas*, which refer to the Sunv image, are regarded as later interpolations.

According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Yājñavalkya and his pupils, having been inflicted with the sin of *Brahmahatyā* and advised by Brahmā, worshipped the god *Vālukeśvara* of twelve beams in the city of Vāyupur, took bath in the tanks including the *Sūryakuṇḍa* and merged them into the world of Sūrya *(Sūrya-maṇḍalam)*. Ten *Rākṣasas* named *Yātudhānas* who were probably indigenous tribes of India are said to have been the followers of Sūrya and roamed with the deity.[114] The reference to the *Rākṣasas* wandering along with the god can refer only to the icon of the Sun. Similarly, the reference to the worship of the god *Vālukeśvara* of twelve beams in the city of Vāyupur may clearly mean to refer to the worship of a Sun-image in a temple. Further, from the presence of a *Sūrya-kuṇḍa*, which became quite common in classical and medieval India[115] and was an integral part of the Sun temple complex, it appears that there existed the image and temple of the Sun at this place. The legend of Yājñavalkya occurs in many early Purāṇas, which do not mention the worship of *Vālukeśvara* or *Sūryakuṇḍa*. It may, therefore, be said that these additions were interpolated in the original story in the later period. In the *Vāyu Purāṇa,* they were added after the 5th century A.D.[116] to meet the popular demands for image and temple. These passages seem to have been influenced by the *Sāmba Purāṇa,*[117] which refers to the twelfth form of the Sun that is similar to *Vālukeśvara* of twelve beams. The god *Vālukeśvara* who was no other than the Sun god is specifically mentioned as of twelve beams. This is very much in conformity with the Magian tradition of worshipping the Sun in his twelfth form. All these lead us to presume that there were some foreign elements in the Sun cult as referred to in these passages of the *Vāyu Purāṇa.*

Detailed instructions are found in the *Matsya Purāṇa*[118] for the construction of Sun images. It indicates that the practice of making Sun-images was already an established fact. There is no reference to Irānian features such as northerner's dress, high boots etc., which came to be incorporated in the orthodox literature from the 6th-7th cent. A.D. as is evident from the *Sāmba Purāṇa.*[119] Therefore, the *Matsya Pūraṇa* passages cannot be later than the sixth cent. A.D. As noticed earlier, no mention is made of Sun images in earlier Purāṇas like the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa* that were composed between the 3rd-5th cent. A.D.[120]. Therefore, these passages may be placed between 5th-6th A.D. Cent.[121] Similarly, Sun-images are referred to in connection with several solar vows but these passages cannot be earlier than the sixth century A.D.[122] However, there prevailed the custom of making Sun images in society from first century A.D. onwards as is evidenced by the iconography.[123] The early Purāṇas ignored it out of their orthodoxy, as the tradition of Sun images seems to have been alien to the Vedic tradition.[124]

Needless to say, the Vedic[125] and the Epic[126] texts were not totally unfamiliar with the essentials of the vows like fasting, resorting to severe penances and austerities etc. in honour of gods. However, the development of vows on an organized scale as the part of a particular religious faith is essentially a Paurāṇic concept.[127] In the *Viṣṇu,* the *Vāyu,* the *Brahmāṇḍa* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas,* there are no references to solar vows. However, penances and austerities, fasting in honour of the Sun god etc. are referred[128] to several times. *Sauravratas* are mentioned for the first time in certain chapters of the *Matsya Purāṇa.*

The main solar vows are the *Kalyāṇasaptamī, Viśokasaptamī, Phalasaptamī, Śarkarāsaptamī, Kamalasaptamī, Mandārasaptamī, Śubhasaptamī*[129] and *Sūryasaṅkrānti*[130] in the early Purāṇas.

The *Kalyāṇasaptamī vrata* is to be performed on Sunday of the seventh day of a bright fortnight. It centers round the worship of the Sun with flowers, sandals, white clothes, incense, eatables, raw sugar, salt and fruits. Eight pictures of the Sun god drawn on the eight petals of a lotus should be worshipped by the recitation of a *mantra* having eight names of the Sun deity. One who observes this *vrata* attains freedom from diseases, liberation from all sins, prosperity and long life.[131]

The *Viśokasaptamī vrata*[132] is to be kept on the sixth and the seventh days of the bright fortnight in the month of *Māgha.* On the sixth day, the observer of the *vrata* should take bath with black sesame and observe fast and celibacy. After taking bath and performing the *japa* in the morning, he should worship the golden lotus as *Arka.*

On the seventh day, he should observe silence, eat food without oil and salt and give away the lotus, clothes etc. in charity. This makes the observer free from all sorrows and diseases for a period of ten *padmas*. The observer of this *vrata* with no particular desire attains unification with *Brahma*.

The *Phalasaptamī*[133] is to be celebrated on the seventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa*. The vow requires the worship of the Sun with a golden image and golden lotus under various names. The rewards of this vow are the attainment of endless fruits, prosperity and the freedom from diseases and ultimately the attainment of the *Sūryaloka*. In this *vrata*, the Sun god has been identified with Brahmā, Indra, Viṣṇu, Śiva and *Varuṇa*, which shows that he was regarded as the highest.

The *Śarkarāsaptamī*[134] is to be observed on the seventh day of a bright fortnight in the month of *Vaiśākha*. The Sun is to be worshipped by drawing a lotus on an altar, reciting hymn propitiatory for Sāvitri and employing incense etc. One who celebrates it attains sons, grandsons and final emancipation.

The *Kamalasaptamī vrata*[135] is to be celebrated on the seventh day of bright fortnight in the spring. The Sun is worshipped here in the form of a golden lotus by means of flowers, incense etc. and recitation of *mantra* sacred to the Sun under various names — *Kamala*, *Prabhākara* etc. The observer should then give away gifts and food to the Brāhmaṇas. This enables one to possess inexhaustible wealth and to go to the *Sūrya-maṇḍalam*.

The *Mandārasaptamī vrata*[136] is to be observed on the seventh day in the month of *Māgha*. Here the Sun is to be worshipped by means of a golden image along with an eight-petalled lotus. The god is invoked here in the name of *Bhāskara, Sūrya, Arka, Aryamā, Vedadharma, Caṇḍabhānu, Pūṣan* and *Ānanda*. The employment of *mandāra* flowers in this vow forms a special feature of it.[137] In the ā*ubhasaptamī,*[138] the Sun is worshiped by means of the golden ox and golden cow as born from him and also by flowers, incense etc. In addition, *mantra* is recited to *Aryamā priyām*.

The *Sūryasaṅkrānti vrata*[139] is to be observed on the day of equinoxes or solstices. The Sun should be worshipped by drawing an eight-petalled lotus under eight different names in the pericarp of the lotus. The *arghya* of water, sandal and flowers is to be given on the floor to the Sun. This entitles the observer to be honoured by the gods in the kingdom of Indra.

These *vratas* display a fixed procedure of the worship, the supremacy of the divinity and exclusive devotion to him. Thus, they appear to be connected with sectarian Sun worship but their nature is essentially domestic. There is no reference to any regular image or public worship. However, the references to the making of golden man on the lotus as the solar symbol clearly show the foreshadowing of the iconic tradition.

Besides these occasions, Sun worship is prescribed in general on Sunday (Sun: *Ravi* being the name of Sun, *Vāra:* day) by drawing a twelve-petalled lotus with red sandal.[137] In the fore part of the lotus, the horses of the Sun should be inscribed. Here he has been described as the soul of the universe, the basis of the *Ṛk-*, the *Yajus-*

and the *Sāma*-Vedas. One who observes this ritual attains freedom from all sins and goes to the *Sūrya-maṇḍalam*. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,*[141] it is prescribed for every householder to perform this form of Sun worship as one of the daily obligations. It involves the *ācamana, arghya* of water and recitation of a hymn, which invokes the Sun god under various names such as *Vivasvat, Bhāsvat, Savitṛ* and *Viṣṇu* etc. It is stated that the *Sūryavrata* is one of the sixty ordinances explained by Śiva.[142]

The existence of various types of Sun worshippers is well revealed by the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. The subjects of Rājyavardhana who worshipped the Sun god included variety of Sun worshippers.[143] Some of them paid adoration by presenting to him the *arghya,* giftss and other oblations. The second class maintained silence, while the third repeated the Vedic hymns. The fourth lay down on river sandbanks without taking food and the fifth offered oblations to the fire and repeated solar hymns day and night. The sixth cast their eyes on him standing there and the seventh worshipped him by presenting incense, flowers, oblations, unguent prayers, food, lamps and other offerings. The *pūjā* form of worship was getting popular though persons also resorted to older traditions.

It is said in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[144] and other early Purāṇas that the *cakra* of Viṣṇu, the trident of śiva, *vimāna* of Kubera and *śakti* of Kārttikeya were made by Viśvakarmā out of the pared glory of the Sun. This is undoubtedly indicative of the superiority of the Sun over Viṣṇu and other gods. It is stated that Brahmā prayed to the Sun god for the continuance of his creation. Evidently, the power of Sūrya was greater than that of Brahmā.[145] The prominent place of the Sun god in the legends of Yājñavalkya, Rājyavardhana, Brahmā and Aditi and the reference to *Sauradarśana*[146] may tend to show that the Sun was occupying an important position. The equality of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Sūrya is indicated when these four gods are regarded as indistinguishable.[147] Further, the Vaiṣṇava, the Śaiva and the Saura vows are treated on equal terms in the early Purāṇas.[148] Sūrya has been identified with Śiva in the *Matsya Purāṇa.*[149]

IV

The late Purāṇas and the Upa-purāṇas throw a flood of light on the Sun cult as developed between the 6th century A.D. and the 12th-13th centuries A.D. A vast *Saura* literature came to be developed in this period. However, most of these works such as the *Sūrya Purāṇa,* etc. have been lost except the *Sāmba Purāṇa*. Of all the extant Purāṇas, the *Sāmba Purāṇa* appears to be the earliest work of the *Sauras*. The verses in the *Skanda,* the *Brahma,* the *Varāha,* the *Agni* and the *Garuḍa Purāṇas* show that sectarian form of Sun worship have certainly been borrowed from the *Sāmba Purāṇa.*[150] The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* also appears to have been the borrower from the same Purāṇa.[151] The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* and the *Sāmba Purāṇa* are the most comprehensive and complete documents of the Sun cult of the Magian tradition.

A full-fledged Sun-sect developed in the later Paurāṇic times on an unprecedented scale along with all the paraphernalia. The indisputable supremacy of the god, the exclusive devotion, the fixed procedure of worship and other sectarian features are found in the *Sāmba*, the *Bhaviṣya*, the *Varāha*, the *Skanda* and other late Purāṇas. The *Sāmba Purāṇa* at its very outset describes the Sun god as the cause of creation, protection and destruction of the universe and also as the soul of Brahmā, Nārayaṇa and Śaṅkara.[152] He creates the universe and various kinds of creatures in the form and capacity of Brahmā[153] and pervades it as well. He is the only god to deserve devotion and worship.[154] He is attended by the gods, the Yakṣas, the Gandharvas, the Apsarās, the three Vedas incarnate, the three Sandhyās incarnate, the Ādityas, the Vasus, the Maruts, the Aśvins, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and many other lesser gods. The reference to Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra etc. as attendants of the solar divinity points to his supremacy. He is eulogized by Brahmā, Rudra[155] and other important gods. Thus, the concept of the Sun god as developed in the later Purāṇas is that of a sectarian deity.

The sectarian character of the solar cult is evidenced by these phenomena: presence of a band of its followers known as the *Sūryabhaktas*,[156] emergence of a special class of priests known as the Magas and the Bhojkas or the Yājakas,[157] and development of a sectarian *Saura* literature. The reference to the *Sūrya-Siddhānta* as distinguished from the *Traividyā-Siddhānta*[158] clearly reveals that the system of Sun worship had developed an exclusiveness that is quite suitable for a sect. Employment of flags and flag-staffs for the Sun god,[159] fixed methods and procedures for his worship,[160] evolution of a code of conduct for his worshippers,[161] use of a sectarian *mantra*,[162] elaborate rules and regulations for making his images and temples and for other constituents of the solar ritual[163] were actually products of a sectarian Sun cult. Moreover, *Bhakti*, which is considered as one of the forceful and potential basis of a sect, is referred to several times in the late Purāṇas.[164]

The sectarian nature of the solar cult as propounded by the late Purāṇas is also corroborated by the secular literature of the period as well.[165]

In the *Sāmba* and other late Purāṇas, the Sun god is of greatly a metaphysical nature. *Sāmba Purāṇa* describes Sūrya as the cause of creation, protection and destruction, whose manifestations are the three Vedas,[166] which appears to have been inspired by the Vedic concept. The influence of Vedantic philosophy may be seen in the Vaśiṣṭha's praise of the Sun god as the highest.

Mihira is one of the twelve common names of the Sun in the later Purāṇas.[167] According to *Sāmba* and other late Purāṇas, the Sun should be worshipped in his twelfth form, which is that of Mihira.[168] All these show that the Magian tradition was also accepted in these Purāṇas. Thus, the sectarian concept of the Sun god synthesized the Vedic and Magian concepts of the Sun god. In between these two, there had been the indigenous tradition of *bhakti*[169] centering round a human Sun god who had a large family also.[170]

In the late Purāṇas, we find that Sun worship came to be formally associated with a foreign priesthood known as Maga. Many of them refer to a legend about the coming of the Magas in India from Śākadvīpa and their association with the Sun cult. The relevant part of the legend in brief is as follows: Sāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa by

Jāmbavatī, was cursed by his father to suffer leprosy for his undesirable relations with the wives of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. To be cured of the disease Sāmba, on the advice of Nārada, constructed a Sun temple at Candrabhāgā (modern Chenab in the Punjab) for the worship of the god. Unfortunately, no Brāhmaṇa was ready to accept the office of a regular priest in this temple. Therefore, he sought the help of Gauramukha, the priest of Ugrasena who advised him to get the Magas, the special Sun worshipping priests from Śākadvīpa. Accordingly, Sāmba went to Śākadvīpa, brought eighteen families of the Magas and installed them into the office of the priest of his temple.[171]

The late Paurāṇic data on the Magas are corroborated by Varāhamihira[172] who clearly instructs that the installation and consecration of Sun images should be caused to be made by the Magas. The legend is repeated in an inscription at Govindapur in Gayā district dated the Śaka year 1059 corresponding to 1137-38 A.D. In its opening stanza, the Magas are said to have been brought into the country by Sāmba. Their existence in India is again indicated by many Irānian features such as *avyaṅga, udīcyaveśa* and *upanātpinaddha.*[173] All these evidences conclusively prove that a certain class of priests known as the Magas with exclusive devotion to the Sun was brought into India from Śākadvīpa.

It has been held[174] that the Magas of the Purāṇas were the Sun worshipping Magi priests of Irān. Originally, they were a priestly tribe of Medea[175] and a section of them worked their way into Zoroastrianism. Compromise between the way of life of the Magi priests and that of the Persians[176] led to the growth of Mithraism not later than the 5th-4th cent B.C.[177] The chief features of the Magi cult were the worship of the Sun god and Fire-god under the name of Mithra, the use of *'barsom'* and a belief in the division of the world between good and evil powers represented by light and darkness[178] respectively. They were famed for magic and occult power. Śākadvīpa must have been situated in Irān, most probably in eastern Irān[175] since the Śaka occupation of western India where the temple of Mūlasthāna is said to have been built by the Magas, was principally the work of the Śakas of eastern Irān.

It has been suggested[180] that the Magas entered into India for the first time in the wake of the Achaemenid invasion of the sixth-fifth century B.C. The first wave of them appears to have been confined to the north-west borders of India where the Achaemenian influence had been paramount. In this very region, the Magas started their activities.[181] They continued coming in waves in the trains of foreign invaders. The second significant wave of the Maga came in the wake of foreign invaders in the post-Mauryan period. The advent of the Magas in waves is indicated by the *Sāmba Purāṇa.*[182] It appears that a third wave of the Magas who were the followers of Zoroaster must have left Irān for India because of the spread of Islam after the sixth cent. A.D. The Magas of this wave came to be known as the Yājakas.[183]

It is difficult to say as to how far these Maga priests could influence the indigenous tradition of Sun worship in ancient India. Many Purāṇas[184] do not mention the role of Magian priests at all and continue the indigenous and national tradition of Sun worship that is found in the *Veda,* the *Brāhmaṇas,* the *Upaniṣads,* the *Sūtras* and the Epics. Purāṇas like the *Kūrma* describe the Sun just as a heavenly body, which is in conformity with the Vedic account of the Sun god. The *Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa* and *Matsya Purāṇas* reveal that the orthodox tradition of Sun worship actually developed on the lines of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*'s[185] prescription of a golden disc to represent the solar orb and the Upaniṣadic[186] doctrine of the golden *Puruṣa* in the Sun who was identified with the Ultimate Being. The prevalence of this tradition even after the spread of the Magian tradition is also attested by the *Kūrma Purāṇa.* Even in the *Sāmba Purāṇa,*[187] the Vedic tradition has not been forgotten. Moreover, the name of the sect of which the Magas became priests is *Saura* — a Sanskritised form. Further, the whole theology[188] of this system is a reflex of the teachings of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Epics.

The fundamentals of the Maga cult could not make much headway in India probably because of the assimilative and absorbing capacity of the Indian culture. Besides, there was hardly anything new for Maga priests to propagate in India. India had already most of the features of the Maga cult (especially its Irānianised form that reached India) such as the worship of the Sun under the name of Mithra in the *Ṛgveda,*[189] the *Atharvaveda,*[190] the *Upaniṣads,*[191] and the Epics,[192] close connection of the fire worship with the Sun right from the times and dualist view of the world in ancient Indian mythology.[193] Therefore, it is evident that the influence of the Magas was negligible as far as the mythology, theology and philosophy of the solar cult were concerned.

The Magas, however, appear to have exerted powerful influence in iconography and temples. Most probably, the images and temples of the Sun deity were not known. If known, they were not popular in India before the advent of the Magas as is evidenced by the Purāṇas.[194] The solar orb was worshipped by the general masses.[195] Further, it is mentioned in the Purāṇas[196] that the masses adored the Sun god not in its anthropomorphic but in the symbolic forms of disc, wheel, lotus, *svastikā,* etc.

However, features such as northern dress, girdle round the waist and high boots occur in solar iconography of the Kuṣāṇa, the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods, which are definitely Persian.[197] They are also referred to in the literary texts[198] of India. These features are confined to north Indian tradition while they are conspicuous by their absence in images of South Indian tradition. The existence of a large number of Sun temples in western India where the Magas first established a Sun temple at Mūlasthāna (modern Multan),[199] also points out that it was the Maga priests who started this new tradition in the Sun cult. The Magian tradition of image making and temple building played the key role in propagating and diffusing the sectarian form of Sun worship. The imaginary and atmospheric conception of the Sun as found in the Vedas, the Epics and the Purāṇas was given a concrete and lithic representation.

The Magas are not referred to in the orthodox literature until the 5th-6th century A.D. This shows that for centuries they remained neglected by the orthodox Hindu society. However, Sun images with Irānian features begin to occur from the Kuṣāṇa period onwards. This is indicative of their popularity particularly among the foreigners and among unorthodox sections of Hindu society. Because of their immense popularity in the pre-Gupta society, the orthodox sections of Hindu society probably accepted them by the 4th-5th century A.D. Their absorption in the orthodox Hindu society by the middle of the sixth cent. A.D. is evidenced by the prescription of Magianised Sun worship in the *Sāmba Purāṇa* whose lower limit goes back to 5th Centery A.D.[200] In a manuscript, dated 550 A.D. found in Nepal the Brāhmaṇas and the Magas are given equal status.[201] The instruction of Varāhamihira (550 A.D.) for making sun images according to Irānian tradition also proves that they were absorped in Hindu society by the middle of the sixth century A.D.

The Magas, no doubt, commanded wide popularity in the later Paurāṇic period. The factors for their temporary success may be as follows: their proselytizing spirit,[202] support of the Indo-Greek, the Scythian and the Kuṣāṇa rulers,[203] the propaganda of the benefits of Sun worship especially its curative properties, their contribution towards image-making and temple-building of Sūrya and their allowance to extend religious privileges to women and men of lower castes.[204] However, in due course they lost their individuality in absence of anything distinctive about them.

The Magas were divided in course of time into two groups: Magas and Bhojakas (later on degraded as the Yājakas).[205] The Magas meditated on the syllable 'M' and the Yājakas adored the Sun by burning incense, offering garlands and various other articles and muttering *mantras*. The aim of both was, of course, the same. *i.e.* the attainment of final emancipation through *Karmayoga*. It appears that the Bhojakas or the Yājakas or the Sevakas were native priests of the solar cult as they chanted Vedic *mantras* etc.[206] However, in the later period, they established matrimonial relations with foreigners like the Magas and came to be degraded as low or apāṅkteya[207] or Devalaka-Brāhmaṇas[208] (temple-priests).

The later Purāṇas elaborately describe the family and attendants the Sun god. His two wives are Rājñī and Nikṣubhā. Rājñī's another name was Saṁjñā or Sareṇu[209] and the Sun had two sons with her — Vaivasvata Manu and Yama Śrāddhadeya and a daughter named Yamī or Kālindī. The shadow of Saṁjñā was Chāyā who is said to be the same as Nikṣubhā and is identified with Pṛthvī. From Chāyā the Sun god Śrutaśravas, Śrutakarman, and a daughter known as Tapatī. The other sons of the Sun god were two Aśvins named Nāsatya and Dasra (from Saṁjñā in Kuru country) and Revanta with the body of a horse having bow and arrows.

Eighteen attendants of the Sun[210] are also referred to. Agni known as *Piṅgala*[211] on the right side of the Sun was engaged in checking the good and bad deeds of all creatures. Indra under the name of *Daṇḍanāyaka*[212] on the left side of the Sun was engaged by the latter to rule over the world with his *daṇḍa* and *nīti*. Kārttikeya and Hara stood at the eastern gate under the name of Rājña and Stoṭa respectively. Yama (i.e. Kalmāṣa) and Garuḍa (i.e. Pakṣīn) stood with two asses at the gate. The two Aśvins stood on two sides of the god. On the south stood Citragupta and Kālā under the names of Jāndakāra and Māṭhara, on the west stood Varuṇa and Sāgara under the names of Prāpnuyāna and Kṣutapā respectively, on the north stood Kubera and

Vināyaka and on the east stood Revanta and Rudra, the latter under the name of Diṇḍī [213] and also Śrī, Mahāśvetā and Mātṛs. In addition to these chief eighteen attendants, Soma also figures as an attendant deity of the Sun at one place and there were fourteen other attendants. These attendants of the god Sūrya are represented in the art of the period.[214]

The later Purāṇas demonstrate many influences in the evolution of the methodology of Sun worship, which are those of the Vedic tradition, indigenous system, as developed in the Epic period, Irānian system, Tāntric practices and śaiva theology. The most important feature in the solar cult was the introduction of image and temple of the Sun god, which is expressly brought out in the later Purāṇas.[215] The rules for the construction of the Sun temples and images are also described.[216] References are also made to six mediums of Sun worship *viz.* fire, water, air, holy place, image and pedestal for the image of a deity.

The later Purāṇas give prominence to the Vedic tradition in their earlier chapters. Irānian elements were, however, already present in the Sun-cult of this period. The Vedic *homa* forms an important part of the worship and the *mantras* to be used are either Vedic or Paurāṇic or both.[217] The hymns in praise of the Sun are called *Vedokta* or *Veda-Vedāṅga-sammita.* The *agnihotragṣha* (the house for the oblations to the fire) is an integral part of the Sun-temples.[218] There is no reference to Tāntric symbols like *yantra* or *maṇḍala* in the earlier chapters.

The Tāntric cult was becoming quite popular particularly in eastern India from 7th-8th centuries onward[219] from which the solar cult could not remain untouched. The *Sāmba Purāṇa* refers to many Tāntric elements in the Sun cult. The method of initiation, which is full of Tāntric influence, involves the selection and preparation of the ground, selection of spiritual preceptors and disciples, offer of *arghya* to the Sun with the *Mahāmantra,* drawing of a *maṇḍala* with the figure of a twelve-petalled lotus in it, performance of *homa* and of *tattvanyāsa* and *mantranyāsa,* worship of the quarter-guardians to whom fish, meat etc. are offered.[220] The *mantras* with Tāntric symbolism are employed at every step. *Maṇḍala* is drawn and various kinds of *mudrās* and *nyāsas* are performed in keeping with the Tāntric philosophy. The methods of performing *abhicāra* rites and *bījas* in *mantras* and practice of *yoga* have also been described and *vaśīkaraṇa, ākarṣaṇa, māraṇa, uccāṭana, vidveśana* and *stambhana* etc.[221] are also referred to.

Sun worship, however, remained free from some fundamental principles of Tāntricism. The concept of a female principle as the cause of the universe[222] is conspicuous by its absence in the later Purāṇas in the Sun-cult. No such concept as of Prajñā of Tāntric Buddhism and Umā of Tāntric Hinduism came to be developed round the name of Saṁjñā or Chāyā — wives of the Sun god — by the solar sectarians. No image of the Sun along with the female consort in Tāntric sense has also been discovered. Thus, the Sun cult appears to have been influenced by Tāntricism outwardly because these practices were in keeping with the Yogic practices, which were prevalent in the Sun cult as early as the Upaniṣads.[223]

The Sun was worshiped at sunrise, mid-day and sunset.[224] The later Purāṇas also describe the method of performing annual worship *(Samvatsarī pūjā)* and annual car-festival *(Rathayātrā)* of the Sun with the use of Vedic and Paurāṇic mantras[225] as well as the methods of the use of incense and other materials in *pūjā*. Elaborate methods and results of observing seven different *saptamī tithis* as well as twelve *śukla-saptamīs*[226] are also described.

From the later Purāṇas we come to know of three centers of Magian type of solar worship. The first place is Mūlasthāna or Maitravana[227] on the Candrabhāgā River, which is identified with Multan in Punjab. Hiuen -Tsang who visited this place in the seventh century A.D., testifies to its great popularity as a centre of the Sun cult.[228] Alberuni, Al-Edrisi, Abu Ishak and Al Ishtakhri etc. also give an account of this temple. The *Purāṇas* also refer to this place as *Ādyasthāna.*[229] According to the legend of *Sāmba*, it was here,that a Sun temple was established for the first time.[230] The fact that Western India where Multan is situated was a strong hold of the Sun cult, is also attested by epigraphy.[231]

The second centre of solar worship is Kālapriya identified with modern Kālpī on the southern bank of Yamunā.[232] Some scholars identify the Kālapriya temple of the Sun at Kālpī with Kālapriyanātha at whose fairs all the three plays of Bhavabhūti were staged while others identify Kālapriya with Mahākāla of Ujjayinī.[233] The third place of Sun worship is mentioned as Sutīra, or Muṇḍīra or Udayācala also known as Sūryakānana, Ravikṣetra, Sūryakṣetra and Mitravana[234] while the *Brahma Purāṇa* expressly calls it Koṇāditya or Koṇārka in Utkala (Odradeśa)[235] It is identified by some scholars with modern Koṇārka near Puri in Orissa.[236] Though some scholars believe that the eastern abode of the Sun was Koṇāditya or Koṇārka in Orissa, but on the basis of the evidences at our disposal there is little difficulty in identifying the place with Gaṅgāsāgara.

Thus, it is evident that the Magian type of the solar cult was developing in the whole of northern India. Further, it was gradually extending towards the eastern India as is evidenced by the recasting of the *Sāmba Purāṇa* and further growth in volume of the text.[237]

Religious syncretism reaches its climax in later Purāṇas and is best illustrated in the *Pañcāyatana Pūjā.*[238] The *Sāmba Purāṇa* speaks of the spirit of approchement among different sectarian deities. The Sun is said to have been worshipped as Viṣṇu in Śvetadvīpa, as Maheśvara in Kuśa dvīpa, as Brahmā in Puṣkara-dvīpa and as Bhāskara in Śakadvīpa.[239] A compromise between the sects of Sūrya and Brahmā[240] is revealed by the Ms. *Puṣkara-Māhātmya* of the *Padma Purāṇa*. The trend of rapprochment between different sects is best represented by the syncretic images of the Sun.[241] The cult-syncretism in the later Purāṇas is corroborated by early medieval inscriptions of the Pratihāra, Pāla, Chauhān and many other Rājput kings who patronized more than one deity and the same at one time.[242]

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32. *Ibid.*, I.66.35.
33. *Ibid.*, I.III.58.
34. *Ibid.*, XII.196.6.
35. *Ibid.*, III.221.9; XII.265.8; III.110.26.
36. *Ibid.*, I.3.56f.
37. *Ibid.*, I.24.15-17.
38. *Ibid.*, III.3.68.
39. Sorenson, S., *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata*, Vol. II, Delhi, 1963, p. 64; *Ram.*, II.25.
40. *Mbh.*, XII.3.19.2f.
41. *Ibid.*, III.134.19.
42. *Ibid.*, I.65.15-16.
43. *Ibid.*, III.134.19. for details, see *supra*, Chapter II, p. 18.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 85.30.
45. *Ibid.*, XII.264.11 – *Ādityaijāyate vṛṣiḥ*; *Ram.*, VI.105.13 – calls him *ghanavṛṣṭi*.

46. *Mbh.*, III.3.6-8.
47. *Ibid.*, III.3.67, 71.
48. *Ibid.*, III. 3.16, 20-23.
49. *Ibid.*, III.134.19.
50. *Ram.*, VI.105.15; *Mbh.*, III.200.85.
51. *Mbh.*, III.3. includes names of planets also in the list of 108 names of the Sun god.
52. *Ibid.*, III.3.22, 24, 25, 27.
53. *Ram.*, V1.105.I9 – *Bhasvate sarvavaksaya raudraya vapuse namaḥ*; cf. *Mbh.*, III.3.58.
54. *Mbh.*, III.200.8. In the *Smṛtis* also, Ādityas are mentioned in the list of terrible deities, *Viṣṇu P.*, LXXXVI.9.
55. *Ram.*, III.63.16— *Āditya bho lokakṛtakṛtagna lokasya satyanṛtakarmasākṣin.*
56. *Mbh.*, XII.362.15, 16.
57. *Ibid.*, III.3.35– *Suciḥ prayatbhag bhūtva stotramarabdha vaṅstataḥ.*
58. *Ram.*, VI.105.29 – *Ādityaṁ preksya japatvedaṁ paraṁ harṣamavaptavan.*
59. *Mbh.*, III.3.35, 39; *Ram.*, VI.105.29. In the *Smṛti* literature, these features are also mentioned in details. Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras,* Vol. II, pt. I, Poona, 1930-53, pp. 315-21.
60. *Mbh.*, III.3.34 – *Yogamasthāya dharmātmā vayuvakṣo jitendriyaḥ.*
61. *Ram.*, II.95.7– *Ādityamupatisthante niyamadurdhvabahavaḥ.*
62. *Ibid.*, III.3.34, 1.172.12.
63. *Ibid.*, III.3.68; *Ram.*, VI.105.16-20.
64. *Mbh.*, III.3. 33 – *puṣpopaharairbalibhiraracayitva divakaram.*
65. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.
66. *DHI,* p. 433.
67. *JISOA*, III. No. 2, p. I, 25; *Lalitakalā*, No.6, Oct. 1959, p. 46.
68. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
69. *Mbh.*, III.3.77, 64.
70. Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Paurāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs,* Dacca, 1940, pp. 215-227.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
73. The presence of the Magian tradition of Sun cult is proved by the evidence of coins with Mihira legend and Sun-images with Irānian traits from the Kuṣāṇa period onwards. *DHI,* p. 433.
74. The reference to a Sun sect — '*Sauras*'— in the *Mahābhārata* (VII.82.16) shows the emergence of non-Vedic trend in the post-Vedic period.
75. *Viṣṇu P.*, II.8.Iff.
76. *Ibid.*, II .8.11-I2 – *Ahorātravyavasthānakārnaṁ bhagavān raviḥ*; II.8.67ff.
77. *Ibid.*, II.8.53, 58 – *sa hanti Sūryaṁ samdhyāyā nopāstiṁ kurute tu yaḥ.*
78. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CII.20, CI TI.6.
79. *Ibid.*, CIX.63.
80. *Ibid.*, CIX.73.
81. *Viṣṇu P.*, II.10; Roy, S.N., 'Early Purāṇic Account of Sun and Solar Cult' *Journal of Allahabad University Studies,* 1963 (64), pp 39-59; Srivastava, V.C., 'The Paurāṇic Records on the Sun worship', *Purāṇa,* Vol. XI, No.2, p. 232.
82. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.11.39 refers to the *ācamana and* the *arghya* to Sūrya. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIX refers to the *japa* as one of the means of Sun worship. In the *Smṛtis,* the Vedic tradition

of worshipping the Sun god by means of the *japa,* the *arghya,* the *upasthāna,* the *sandhyopāsanā* etc. is continued, which the early Purāṇas have tried to imbibe. Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 313ff.

83. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIX.61.
84. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.5; *Vāyu P.*, 69.209-21*; Brahmāṇḍa P.*, II.35. 14-26.
85. *Viṣṇu P.*, IV.13; *Vāyu P.*, IVC.22; *Brahmāṇḍa P.* III.71.23.
86. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIII.2; CIII.5; CIV.18-29; CIV.36.
87. *Ibid.*, CIV.18-29; CIV.36.
88. *Viṣṇu P.*, IV. 1.34-36; *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, CIX.62-63; *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIX.69-71; CIX.65; CIX.77. It is tempting to identify this king with Rājyavardhana of the Vardhana dynasty in view of the identical name and identical faith of both the personages. Both are the worshippers of the Sun but the early character (3rd-5th century A.D.) of the cantos where this story occurs and different genealogy does not allow us to identify them. Rājyavardhana of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* appears to have been a mythical figure.
89. Srivastava, V.C., 'The Solar Cult as revealed by the Gupta and post-Gupta inscriptions', *Bhāratīya Vidyā,* Vol. XXVII, Nos. 1-4, pp. 41-48 ; Fleet, J.F.(Ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* Vol. III, London, 1888, pp. 70, 79-88, 125-129, 200-210.
90. *DHI,* pp. 432-36.
91. *Vāyu P.*, XXXI.37; *Brahmānda P.*, II.13.125.
92. Dikshitar, V.R.R., *Purāṇa Index, Matsya P.*, 184.31.
93. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, 100.14.
94. Agrawala, V.S., *Matsya Purāṇa — A Study,* Varanasi, 1963, p. 21.
95. *Viṣṇu P.*, I.15.126-131; *Vāyu P.*, 66.66-67; *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, 3.2.67-69; *Matsya P.*, 6.3-5.
96. Roy, S.N., *Paurāṇic Dharma Evaṁ Samāja,* (H), Allahabad, p. 48.
97. *Matsya P.*, 9.86.
98. *Viṣṇu P.*, II.10.19; *Matsya P.* 126.25.
99. Dikshitar, V.R.R., *The Purāṇa index,* Vol. III, Madras, 1955, pp. 683-86.
100. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.5.15-24.
101. Roy, S.N., 'Early Paurāṇic Account of Sun and Solar Cult', *Journal of Allahabad University Studies,* 1963, p. 48.
102. *Vāyu P.*, XXXI.37; *Brahmāṇḍa P.*, II.13.125. Such titles are given to the Sun in the *Mahābhārata* too.
103. Srivastava, V.C., 'The Paurāṇic Records on the Sun worship', *Purāṇa,* XI. No.2, pp. 241-243.
104. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIII.13.
105. *Ibid.*, LXXVII; Agrawala, V.S., *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Eka Sāṅskṛtika Adhyayana* (H), Allahabad, 1961, p, 165.
106. Macnicol, N., *Indian Theism,* London, 1915, pp. 7, 20.
107. *Viṣṇu P.*, IV.13.11, 12, 15.
108. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CVI.1, 3.
109. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.5.25.
110. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIX, 59-61, 75-78.
111. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.2; *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, LXXVII.1-42.
112. *Matsya P.*, XI.32.36.
113. *DHI,* 434ff. Actual pieces of Sun images of the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods have been found and the Gupta inscriptions testify to the fact that there had been Sun temples in the Gupta period; Srivastava, V.C., *Bhāratīya Vidyā,* XXVII, (1-4), pp. 41-48.

114. *Vāyu P.*, 69-12.
115. Sankalia, H.D., *Archaeology of Gujarat and Kathiawar,* Bombay, 1948, pp. 212.
116. *SWAI-S,* p. 221.
117. *Sāmba P.*, III.3.
118. *Matsya P.* CCLXI. 1-7; XCIV.
119. Hazra, *Studies* Vol. I., pp. 57ff. Varāhamihira (550 A.D.) in his *Bṣhat Samhitā,* ch. 57, directly refers to these features.
120. Hazra, *Paurāṇic Records,* p. 175.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 176 assigns these chapters to *circa* 550-650 A.D.
122. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 48. However, S.N. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 165 takes it to be earlier than 550 A.D.
123. Banerjea, J.N., 'Sūrya, Ādityas and the Navagrahas', *JISOA,* XVI, pp. 53ff.
124. The *Sāmba* and the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇas* state that the Irānian Magas were responsible for the introduction of this practice. R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upa-Purāṇas,* Vol.I, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 31ff.
125. *G.S.*, III.1.28.
126. *Mbh.*, III.3.32; *Ram.*, II.95.7.
127. Hazra, *Paurāṇic Records,* p. 228.
128. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIX.49, CX.26; *Viṣṇu P.*, III.5.14.
129. *Matsya P.*, 74.2.3.
130. *Ibid.*, 98.
131. *Ibid.*, 74.19.
132. *Ibid.*, 75.
133. *Ibid.*, 76.
134. *Ibid.*, 77.
135. *Ibid.*, 78.
136. *Ibid.*, 79.
137. *Ibid.*, 79.5.
138. *Ibid.*, 79.
139. *Ibid.*, 79.
140. *Ibid.*, 97.5-9.
141. *Viṣṇu P.*, III. 11.39-40.
142. *Matsya P.*, CI.63.
143. CIX.50ff. Ānandagiri also informs us that Śaṅkara encountered the followers of a Sun sect whose leader was Divākara. There had been six classes of devotees of the Sun. Details may be found in Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
144. *Viṣṇu P.*, III.2.11.
145. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, CIII.
146. *Vāyu P.*, 104.16, 16.131-34 also refers to it; Handiqui, K.K., *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture,* Sholapur, 1949, p. 216.
147. *Matsya P.*, 52.23.
148. *Ibid.*, Ch. 95-101.
149. *Ibid.*, LV.3-5.
150. Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Upa-Purāṇas,* Vol. I, p. 59.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
152. *Śāmba P.*,1.1– *Namaḥ savitrejagāekacakṣuṣejagatprasūtisthitināśahetave/ Trayīmayāyatriguṇātmadhāriṇaviriñcinārāyaṇaśamkarātmane//.*

153. *Ibid.*, 4.4.
154. *Ibid.*, 2.7– *Nātaḥ parataro devaḥ kaścidanyonaradhipa;* 9–*Sarvasyajagatonathaḥ karmasakṣivibhavasuḥ;* 20 – *tasmadan yatrabhaktirhimakaryyasubhamichata* .
155. *Ibid.*, 16.25-35; *Bhaviṣya P.*, 1.124.8.
156. *Ibid.*, 38.10 – *Nābhya sūryecca tadbhaktamnavamadhyacanya devatā.*
157. *Ibid.*, 27.3, 4, 22, 23.
158. *Ibid.*, 28.15— *Traividyāsiddhantaratāḥ sūryasiddhānta vedinaḥ.*
159. *Ibid.*, 33.8.
160. *Ibid.*, Chs. 47-83.
161. *Ibid.*, 44.
162. *Ibid.*, 44.
163. *Ibid.*, Chs. 30-31. 36-37; cf. *Bhaviṣya P.*, I.13 I.132.
164. *Sāmba P.*, 38.7-12. The late Paurāṇic records on Sun sect are corroborated by the epigraphy of the period. The Māliya copper plate inscription (571-72 A.D.) describes Mahārāja Dhārāpaṭṭa of the Maitraka dynasty as a *Paramādityabhakta.* The Sonepat copper seal inscription informs us that Harṣavardhana was a *Paramādityabhakta.* The Pratihāra kings — Rāmabhadra and Vināyakapāla are also mentioned as the *Paramādityabhakta* in Barāh copper plate and Pratāpagarh inscription respectively. Viśvavarūpasena and Sūryasena of the Sena dynasty (12th cent. A.D.) are described as the *Paramasaura.*181. Hazra, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.
165. *Sūrya śatakam,* 22 – *prātaḥ prollaṅghaya viṣṇoh padamapi ghṛṇayevātivegādda vīyasyuddyām dyotamānā dahatu dinapaterdurnirmittaṁ dyutirvaḥ;* 25, 29 88, 89, 90, 91, 92.
166. *Sāmba P.*, 1.1-6.
166. *Sāmba P.*, 9.2 ; *Brahma P.*, 31.15.
167. *Sāmba P.*, 1.13 says that this *Purāṇa* is concerned with the twelfth form of the Sun.
168. *Ibid.*, 38.10.
169. *Ibid.*, 26.
170. *Sāmba P.*, 26, 48.
171. *Bṛhat Saṁhitā,* 60.19.
172. Rao, Gopinath T.A., *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* 2 vols, New York, 1968, pp. 299-305; cf. *Indian Historical Quarterly,* 1952, XXVIII.
173. Jairazbhoy, *op. cit.*, p.153; Barth, A., *The Religions of India* (Tr. J.A.R. Wood), London, 1882, p. 257; Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 544; Majumdar, R.C. (Ed). *Age of Imperial Unity,* Bombay, 1951, p. 465; Mitra, D., 'Foreign Elements in Indian Population', *Cultural Heritage of India,* Vol. II, pp. 613-15.
174. Moulton, *The Treasure of Magi,* Oxford, 1917, p. 9. Moulton regards them neither Āryan nor non-Āryan but as belonging to a low graded indigenous tribe of Medea.
175. Herodotus was aware of these differences especially in matters connected with the disposal of the dead. They exposed the dead body while the Persians burnt it. cf. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism,* London, 1926, p. 57; Ghirshman, R., *Irān,* Pelican Series, 1963, p.156.
177. Burns, E.M., *Western Civilizations,* London, 1957, p. 70.
178. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism,* pp. 182-253.
179. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *Age of Imperial Unity,* p. 465.
180. *SWAI-S,* pp. 244-254.
181. *Skanda P.*, V1.76; *Sāmba P.*, 26.14; *Bhaviṣya P.*, I.72.4-6 refer to Mūlasthāna (Multan, Punjab) as the original place of the Magianized Sun cult).

182. Hazra, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.
183. Hazra, *op. cit.* p. 96. cf. *Sāmba P.*, 30.22b. The word *Yājaka* has been substituted for the word *Bhojaka*.
184. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Classical Age*, Bombay, 1954, p. 438.
185. *SB*, VII.4.1.10.
186. *BAU*, II.5.5.
187. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 63. cf. *Sāmba P.*, 6.15; 12.8; 12.13; 24.7; 29.15; 30.18.
188. Furquhar, J.N., *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, London, 1920, p. 153.
189. *RV*, III.59.
190. *AV*, XIII.3.13, IX.3.18, III.8.1 and V.12.1.
191. *Taittirīya U.*, I.1.1, I.12.1.
192. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-204.
193. Frazer, J.G., *Worship of Nature*, Vol. I, London, 1926, p. 596; *VM*, p.60; Ludwig, quoted by Pusalker, A.D., *Cultural History of India*, Vol. II, p. 65.
194. *Sāmba P.*, 29.2-6. It is interesting to note that here the Maga priests are not described as responsible for image making but Viśvakarman — the native architect was responsible. It is suggested that Bodh Gayā, Bhājā, Lālā Bhagat and Anantgumphā Sun images represent the native tradition of solar iconography. cf. *DHI*, pp. 432-34.
195. *RV*, I.175.4; V.29.10; *SB*, VII. 4.1. 10; *DHI*, pp. 137-40, 198-99.
196. *Sāmba P.*, 29.2.6. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (Brahma Parvan)* refers to *maṇḍala* form of Sun worship. In commenting upon *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*, II.11.29.16 Haradatta says that the Dravidas used to worship *Āditya* by drawing *maṇḍalas*.
197. Banerjea, J.N., 'Myths Explaining Some Alien Traits of North Indian Sun icons', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, 1952; *DHI*, p. 437.
198. *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, ch. 57 (45-8); *Viṣṇudharmottara*, III.67.1-5.
199. *Sāmba P.*, 29.2.6; *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, Ch. 139 too narrates the incident.
200. Hazra, *op.cit.*, p. 93.
201. *I.A.*, 1911, Jan., p. 18.
202. Vasu, N.N., *Castes and sects of Bengal*, IV.55-57 suggests probable connection of the Sun worship with Śuṅga, Kaṇva and Hūṇa dynasties.
203. Bloch, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Geseltschaft*, 1910, p. 723 believes that the theory of cure of leprosy by the Sun god came from Persia. However, as shown by the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda* there was native tradition also that the Sun god cures leprosy and other skin diseases. *Sāmba P.*, ch. 24; *Mayūra Śataka*.
204. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
205. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
206. *Sāmba P.*, 27.
207. *Bhaviṣya P.*, I.140, 141, 146.
208. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
209. *Sāmba P.*, 10.17b; *Bhaviṣya P.*, I.79b; *Skanda P.*, VII.1.11.65b.
210. *Sāmba P.*, 16.1-22.
211. *Bhaviṣya P.*, I.76.23; *Śāmba P.*, 6.21; III.67.5-7; *Viṣṇudharmottara*, III.67.5-7.
212. *Viṣṇudharmottara*, III.67.5 refers him as Daṇḍīn.
213. *Sāmba P.*, 16.1.24.
214. *IBBS*, p. 160.
215. *Sāmba P.*, 29.2-6–*na purā pratimā hy asit pūjyate maṇḍale raviḥ/ yathaitan maṇḍalam vyomni sthiyate savitus tadā// evam eva pura bhaktaiḥ pūjyate maṇḍalakṛtiḥ / yataḥ prabhṛti capy eṣa*

nirmita visvakarmana / / sarvalokahitarthaya suryasya puruṣakṛtiḥ/ gṛheṣu pratimayas tu na tasaṁ niyamaḥ kvacitt. . . // devayatana-vinyase kāryaṁ mūrtiparikṣanam/; Ibid., I.17a – *Sāmbasya ca tadollasaṁ pratimāsthapanaṁ tathā* It is omitted in the Venkatesvara Ed. but is found in *Eggeling's Ind. Office., Cat.*, VI, p. 1317.

216. *Ibid.*, 29; *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, 57. 46-48.
217. *Śāmba P.*, 30.18, 32.12.; 37.19.
218. *Sāmba P.*, 29.15.
219. Chakravarti, C., *The Tantras, Studies on their Religion and Literature*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 80-89.
220. *Sāmba P.*, 39.41.
221. *Sāmba P.*, Ch.I.47-83. cf. Chakravarti, C., *op. cit.*, pp. 38-44, 80-82.
222. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, Bombay, 1955, pp. 314ff.
223. *Maitrī U.*, I.2.
224. *Sāmba P.*, 29.
225. *Ibid.*, 34.14ff.
226. *Ibid.*, 46.
227. *Sāmba P.*, I.38.
228. Beal, A., *Buddhist Records of Western Countries*, Vol. II, London, 1906, p. 274.
229. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
230. *Sāmba P.*, ch. 24-26.
231. Sankalia, *op. cit.*, pp. 60, 80, 137,212 ; Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 80, 162, 218.
232. Mirashi, V.V., 'Three Ancient Famous Temples of the Sun,' *Purāṇa*, Vol. VIII, No. I, p. 42.
233. Kane, P.V., (Ed.) *Uttararāmacarita* (4th Ed.) (Intro.), Tripurāri, A Commentator of Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* identifies both. Bhandarkar, D.R., *EI*, vol. VII. p. 30.
234. *Sāmba P.*, 42.2.
235. *Brahma P.*, 28-32, Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
236. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 146. Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
237. Hazra, *op. cit.*, p. 62 suggests that the present *Sāmba Purāṇa* was composed in Orissa.
238. Banerjea, J.N., *Pañcopāsanā* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1950.
239. *Sāmba P.*, 26; 37; 38.
240. Chatterjee, A., *Padma Purāṇa — A Study*, pp. 193-94. The *Śāradātilakam*, XIVA.2, emphasizes the syncretic character of the worship of the Sun.
241. *DHI*, p. 551; A comprehensive analysis of the composite form Sūrya-Śiva in the name of *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava* is found in the book on *History of Śaivism* (Calcutta, 1974) by Professor Pranabananda Jash.
242. *SWAI-S*, pp. 366-391.

Chapter - 4

GROWTH AND POPULARITY OF SUN WORSHIP IN EARLY BENGAL

The lands comprised within early Bengal find no mention at all in the Vedic Saṁhitās. The horizon of the earliest Āryan singers is apparently limited to the region extending eastwards only as far as Bhagalpur. Further, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[1] refers to the Puṇḍras, an ancient tribe of Bengal, as *dasyus* or outlandish barbarians who lived in large numbers beyond the borders of Āryandom. The *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*[2] that probably refers to the Vaṅgas, another early Bengal tribe, do so in contemptuous terms. Thus, it is quite clear that Bengal was outside the zone of Āryan culture even in the later Vedic period. The state of things was not very different even in the *Sūtra* period. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*[3] prescribes a penance for those who visit, among other countries, Puṇḍra and Vaṅga representing north Bengal and east Bengal. Even the Jaina *Sūtras* also represent the people of Rāḍha as uncultured and almost savage. The linguistic and ethnological evidences render it highly probable that Bengal was, until the period represented by the *Sūtras,* mostly peopled by non-Āryan races. It may be presumed that they had a developed culture of their own even though it was non-Vedic and non-Āryan.

Religious practices in early Bengal included the reverence and worship, observances and beliefs of the original inhabitants of the different settlements of Bengal.[4] Some idea of this lost history may be had from a critical study of the practices of the present primitive tribes of Bengal, as there has been no revolutionary change in their religious beliefs and practices since time immemorial. Incidentally, an attempt has also been made to understand the position of the Sun as a folk god among the Brāhmaṇical womenfolk and the different tribal communities in present-day Bengal in Appendix B.

The antiquity of Sun worship in early Bengal is obscure. However, the earliest definite reference to the worship of the god in this land occurs in the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* that may be dated in the fourth century B.C. In this *Upaniṣad,*[5] the Puṇḍras and the Suṁhas are described as the Sun worshipping tribes. In the Epics, the country of the Puṇḍras who may be regarded as low caste[6] corresponds with Bengal and Bihar. The Gupta epigraphs and the Chinese records place the territory of the Puṇḍras – then styled Puṇḍravardhana – in north Bengal.[7] The country of the Suṁhas roughly corresponds to a portion of or to *Rāḍha* which lies to the west of the Ganges, including

Tamluk (Midnapore) and the districts of Hooghly and Burdwan. The non-Āryan Puṇḍras and Suṁhas believed in the worship of the Sun as the highest reality.[8] This view of *Brahman* held by the Puṇḍras and the Suṁhas was shared by Bharadvāja, as is alleged by the sage Gautama. It is deserving of note that the Bharadvājas were specially connected with Pūran – a Sun god. Most probably, they had been the spokesperson of the class of peoples most likely non-Āryan who believed in the supremacy of the Sun god. It can now be safely said that the worship of the Sun as the Supreme reality prevailed in Bengal at least since the later Vedic period among the dominant tribes of north and west Bengal. However, whether the worship in human form was prevalent in those days is very difficult to say at the present state of our knowledge.

Sun worship was no less popular in pre-Gupta period. From inscription as well as the extant terracotta figures, plaques, seals and sealing, we can draw a comprehensive picture of the adoration of the Sun god. Profound knowledge about the Vedic literature in ancient Vaṅga is strongly reflected from a Chandraketugarh seal (first century A.D.).[9] It is said therein that "by his banners Śiva is (recognizable as) the knower of Brahmā (or a Vedic philosopher)." Evidently, it was in the pre-Gupta ancient Vaṅga that Brāhmaṇas besides Maga Brāhmaṇas, started coming into ancient Vaṅga under royal patronage and settling there permanently.[10] Of the Brāhmaṇical deities, Agni, Sūrya, Indra, Śiva and his Śakti, Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī, Gaṅgā and Viṣṇu were widely worshipped in ancient Vaṅga.[11] It seems that the Magians from Irān were not responsible for the first introduction of the image of the Sun god in India because indigenous represention of the god riding on a chariot drawn by horses is evident from the reliefs discovered at Bodh-Gayā, Bhājā, Lala Bhagat and Mathura.[12] The early indigenous representation of the Sun god in image form may be traced in some terracotta plaques from Bengal of the Śuṅga- Kuṣāṇa period.

A terracotta[13] from Tamluk (Pl. 1a) belonging to c. second century B.C. represents a standing winged figure with long stalks of full-blossomed lotus in his hands. He wears a wide repousse torque (*kaṇṭhī*), a *śirastraka,* round-shaped earrings, armlets and beaded bracelets. He has a thick waistband and two wings beside the upper parts of the arms. Cluster of plantains are displayed on either side of the lower part of the stela. In addition, a pitcher-like object with ear of corn shooting from is found on the pericarp of the petalled lotus.

The most interesting feature of the image is the delineation of the wings. The association of wings with Sūrya originally occurs in the *Ṛgveda.* Here he is depicted as the fine-looking winged celestial bird *Garutmān* in some of the hymns.[14] *Suparṇa* (well winged) is no other than the Sun itself. According to Yāska, the *Suparṇa* is '*Divyo divijaḥ*' (one who is 'originated in the sky'). "The learned call (this Āditya) as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and Agni. He is bedecked with divine wings and characterized by beautiful movements".[15] Full-blown lotuses in the hands of the figure are also highly significant. Lotus is connected with the Sun because it blooms only while the Sun shines. Iconography associated the lotus with the Sun because it resembled the bright Sun. Lotus is recognized as a Sun-symbol since early times and stands for the creative force, *i.e.* the producer of all *(Sāvitri sarvasya prasavitṛ).*[16] A full-blown lotus (*vikaśita-padma*) is regarded principally as a Sun-symbol.[17] According to Banerjea,[18] association of lotus with the Sun is fully established by the Purāṇas, which enjoin the execution in solar sculpture of a twelve-petalled lotus. The round-shaped *karṇa - bhūṣaṇas* seem to resemble *Sūrya-mukhī* (*helianthus annus*) flower, which has been traditionally been associated with Sun worship in Bengal. The plantain tree is traditionally connected with the Sun worship, which is evident from its employment in the *Māgha-maṇḍala Sūrya-vrata* as the symbolic representation of the Sun god.[19]

It is, thus, clear that the winged figure represents the Vedic Sun god Sūrya. It also shows that the Sun worship was introduced in ancient Vaṅga during the post-Mauryā and pre-Gupta period under strong Brāhmaṇical influence. This is eloquently reflected in the Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī-Brāhmī Inscriptions found in different parts of lower West Bengal.[20] Prevalence of Sun worship is evident from a good number of such winged figures found in ancient Vaṅga.[21]

The association of lotus in Indian art with *Śrī* (prosperity) or *Lakṣmī* from second-first century B.C. and the representation of lotus in the hands of Sūrya led to some alleged connection between their iconic elements and the growth of some sort of *Sūrya–Śrī* cult. Incidentally, we may refer to a terracotta plaque found from Chandraketugarh, which depicts a winged female figure. She is standing on the petalled lotus with stalks of lotuses in her two hands. Leaves and buds of lotuses are sprouting forth in different directions from her headgear. "She seems to have been represented as a deity of wealth or fertility having been essentially associated with Sūrya — the Sun god".[22]

The representation of Sūrya as a winged human figure[23] is, no doubt, innovative. However, it was not a new one in the context of greater Indian art as such. In the sculptural panels (second century B.C.) of Bhārhut[24] (Sāñchī), we find beautiful winged human figures in Chunar red sandstone. In fact, the basic idea of identifying the Sun god with the celestial bird *Garutmān (divyaḥ sa suparṇaḥ garutmān)* came from the *Ṛgveda* (I.164.46). Interestingly, winged figures are also found in the Art of West Asia[25] and Persia[26] during the fifteenth century B.C. As an example, we may refer to the royal seal[27] (first half of the second millennium B.C.) of Shaushatar, the king of Mitanni, which depicts a hybrid figure with outspread wings, spoked wheelface and tail of a bird. No doubt, the figure represents the Sun as a bird. The currency of the concept of Sunbird as well as of the Indo-European language among both the Mitannians and the Vedic Āryans points to some sort of connection between them. It is also well known that the Indian sub-continent had cultural contact with the west from very early times. However, it is deserving of note that there is a considerable time-gap between the above-mentioned royal seal of Shaushatar depicting the Sunbird and the winged Tamluk Sūrya. Probably, this time-gap contributed in building up the foundation of an art-movement that culminated in the mass-productions of art objects in India with the emergence of the Imperial Mauryas. The difference in time may also be further explained away. The Vedic rites and rituals had dominated the Āryan society in its earlier phase so greatly that there was very little scope for image worship. However, the anti-establishment trend in customs and practices swept across the country with the rise of the Imperial Mauryas and the image worship gained predominance over the Vedic rites and rituals. This was reflected in the iconic representations of the time — both the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical ones. The cross-cultural connections as further reflected in the Hellenic and Hellenistic art[28] of the time gave the momentum for a creative artistic activity. In this, the two prominent factors — the indigenous formulae drawn from the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, etc. and the foreign influence — had played a vital role. The Tamluk terracotta winged Sūrya is the product of the time and of the experiences that these two classes of people had lived in and developed over the years.

It is quite clear that the Sun worship in ancient Vaṅga developed along an indigenous line in which the Sun god appeared in the form of a winged god. The indigenousness lay in the additional attributes like those of the *maṅgala-ghaṭa* with sprouting leaves, plantain tree, etc. These additional attributes attest to the local socio-economic needs and practices of the society of ancient Vaṅga, which was predominantly an agrarian one.

Another terracotta Sūrya (first century B.C. /A.D.) from Chandraketugarh, 24 Parganas shows the god seated on the chariot drawn by four horses, which is unique in Bengal.[29] He is flanked by two female figures. An animal-faced giant, the symbol of darkness, is shown as being trampled down under the rolling wheel of the celestial car. The god has a circular halo behind his head and wears a turbaned crown and a garland with a pendant.

The sacred thread consisting of three strands on the image in question is also discernable on the figure of Agni hailing from Chandraketugarh. As already mentioned, the Vedic rites and sacrifices, which were in vogue in ancient Vaṅga, played a vital part in the enactment of the *Yājñic* rituals. In the Ṛgvedic hymn,[30] Sūrya is identified with Agni. The sacred thread of Sūrya may have the same ritualistic implications as in the case of *agnitraya* in the iconic representation of Agni.[31] Aruṇa appears for the first time in Bengal as the charioteer of the Sun god in this very image. The two female attendants flanking the Sun god may be identified as ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. The artistic cohesion and religious emphasis of the entire iconic composition clearly shows that the religious orientation in ancient Vaṅga was undeniably in keeping with the performances of Vedic rites and rituals 'in the midst of a number of Brāhmaṇical deities who were visualized in the growing Paurāṇic ambience'.

The god is riding in this specimen on a toy-cart drawn by four horses. On the Indo-Greek and Kuṣāṇa coins, such representations have also been found. Four horses drawing the Sun's chariot also occur in the Bodh-Gayā railing-image (first century B.C.), the sculpture from Bhājā near Pune (first or second century B.C.), the Lālā Bhagat relief (Kanpur, U.P.) of the second century A.D. and the Sūrya relief of Anantagumpha cave of Khandagiri (Orissa) group of Jaina shrines (first century A.D.).[32] In the *Ṛgveda*, Sūrya is described as "moving on a car drawn by one, by several or by seven fleet and ruddy horses" (I.115, 3-4; VII.60, 3; VII.63, 2, etc.). Evidently, no particular significance is attached in the *Ṛgveda* to number four in respect of the horses of the Sun god's car. According to Cunningham, the four horses resemble the representation of Helios – the Greek Sun god. The Greek impact in solar iconography of Bengal does not seem to be unexpected in view of the discovery of the images of foreign deities like Janus (the Roman God of Beginnings) and Athena in the land of ancient Vaṅga in the Pre-Gupta era".[33] This resemblance is, however, superficial because the features of the Sun god along with ūṣā and Pratyūṣā and the chariot are Indian in character. Characteristic features of the Kuṣāṇa period are also traceable in the image under review in its round-shaped turban-like headdress and elaborate nimbus. Thus, it may be said now that the foreign cultures like the Hellenic and Kuṣāṇa ones have already arrived and made their impact felt in the Bengal solar iconography, though the religious spirit emphatically revolves round the *bhakti* element.

One of the most significant findings about the Chandraketugarh terracotta Sūrya is that the god, though largely resembling in many iconographic features with the Bodh Gayā, Bhājā, Lālā Bhagat or Anantagumpha Sun images, appears as an independent deity along with his attendants and thus seems to have been object of worship with utmost devotion, while those four images of Sūrya were depicted as accessory decorative figures in the religious architecture of the heterodox or other Brāhmaṇical sects. A few more words need to be said about the greater but apparent similarity particularly between the Sūrya relief from Bhājā Vihāra[34] near Pune, Western Ghāṭs and the Chandraketugarh terracotta Sūrya. The Sūrya image hailing from Bhaja is a part of a unique relief and as such depicted in a spirit more characterized by the narrative instinct of the sculptor than any sort of a pronounced impulse of *bhakti*. The Chandraketugarh Sun-relief, on the other hand, demonstrates the deep-rooted element of the *bhakti* cult that was literally sweeping the country during the pre-Gupta period.

A terracotta seal[35] (*c.* first century A.D.) from Hadipur (North 24 Parganas) displays on one side a male figure in rigid *samapādasthānaka* pose. The figure holds in his right hand the heavy stalk of fully petalled lotus. Another smaller lotus appears beneath the elbow of the right hand and a lotus-bud on the other side of the larger petalled lotus. The left hand is placed akimbo. The figure is flanked by lotus plants on its right side and a banana plantain on its left side. A horse is standing in an east-west direction behind the plantain tree. The figure is bedecked with a headdress of the type of Kausia cap and earrings. A square-shaped small symbol is found on the right shoulder. Interestingly, it wears a close fitting jacket gathered at the anklets and soft-padded boots. Since the figure holds the stalk of the lotus in one of his hands and wears a northerner's dress (*udīcyaveśa*), it could be taken as the image of Sūrya belonging to the formative stage.

Tunic and boots in solar iconography occurs for the first time in ancient Vaṅga in this specimen. The northerner dress of the Sun god indicates the coming of the Irānian Sūrya (Mitra) in ancient Vaṅga. Further, this should have happened during the time of the settlement of the immigrants from the north-west. This is further corroborated by the fact that a pot-shred carrying an inscription refers to a Maga Brāhmaṇa (*Jayanto-makataḥ eko vastraḥ dvijaḥ*)".[35]

Apart from the lotus motif, this sort of dress (*udīcyaveśa)* is solely worn by the Sun god. This is evidenced by a good number of Sun images represented in coins, stones and terracotta from north western India in the post-Maurya and pre-Gupta period. The *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* (57.46-47) lays down that he should be clad in the fashion of a northerner, (his body) from the feet up to the breast being covered *(kuryādudichyaveśaṁ gudhaṁ padaduro yāvat).* The *Viṣṇuudharmottara-purāṇa* (Ch. 67.2.16) of a later date says that he (the Sun god) should be covered with a coat mail and should wear a northerner's dress, his waist girdle representing *yaviyaṅga (avyaṅga).* Banerjea thinks that writers of such texts highlight in this way the alien origin of this variety of Sun cult, which was introduced into India in the beginning of the Christian era or even earlier. The Sun image under discussion bears close resemblance to MIIRO (Irānian Mithra) in respect of the extended right hand and the hand placed akimbo. ELIOS (Helios), the Sun god, appears on the reverse of coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka. A coin type of Huviṣka depicts on the reverse a solar deity with radiate ṇimbus, which makes a gesture of blessings and looks like MIIRO (Indian Mithra) without his sword.[37]

The display of the horse in the image is quite significant. The *Ṛgveda* often describes Sūrya as riding on a car drawn by one, by several or by seven fleeting and ruddy horses.[38] In one verse (RV. 7.77.3), he is depicted as a white brilliant stallion brought by ūṣā. All the solar gods are inalienably connected with the horse. Therefore, it is evident that the deity is no other than the Sun god himself. Thus, an intermediary stage emerges in the development of the solar images from a winged one to the *udicyaveśi* along with the horse. The display of altogether three lotuses may indicate that the devotee or the sculptor felt like demonstrating the Indianness of the solar iconography in view of unavoidable absorption of alien traits. The flow of the same impulse in the successive period is evidenced by the representation of three lotuses in each of the two hands in the Kāshīpur (North 24 Parganas, West Bengal) Sun image of the late Gupta period. The display of the plantain tree, which is associated with the Sun worship, points to the vitality as well as the efforts of the regional traits to survive even in the face of the foreign ones. The Hadipur terracotta serves as one of the best examples of the *udīcyaveśa* type of Sūrya in its very nascent stage in ancient Vaṅga.

The worship of the Sun deity had also infiltrated largely into the various strata of the society in early Bengal.[39] Side by side with the anthropomorphic representation, the aniconic representation of the Sun god and its worship might have also been practiced during this period in Bengal.[40]

A terracotta tablet (early fourth-fifth century A.D.) discovered from Harinarayanpur[41] (South 24 Parganas) represents the solar deity as standing and holding two full-blossomed lotuses in two hands by their stalks. He is endowed with a flat-cap-like headdress and bejeweled with long earrings, necklace and torque. He is also clad in a coat, trousers and boots. Two pillar-like objects are also engraved in the relief. These remind us of the Sūrya pillar of the second century A.D. from

Nāgārjunakonda and may, therefore, be taken as portraying the Sun in addition to his iconic representation.

It appears that in India, the Sun god anthropomorphically have been visualized in two forms. The first one originated with a concept of the Sun as a beautiful celestial winged bird *Garutmān* (*divyaḥ sa suparṇa garutmān*) by the Ṛgvedic seers. The other, which is also based on the *Ṛgveda*[42] envisaged the Sun god as riding a chariot drawn by horses. Here the divinity is conceived as being flanked by his two consorts — ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. The four-horsed terracotta Sūrya from Chandraketugarh clearly attests to the developed concept of Sūrya that was current in early Bengal in the first century A.D.

From the early centuries of the Christian era, the solar cult in northern India seems to have developed along a definite line. The north Indian form came to be reoriented largely by the East Irānian style of Sun worship, which is testified by the images of the divinity in both stone and terracotta, hailing from different parts of northwestern and eastern India. This reoriented form constitutes the third concept in the field of the solar iconography. The terracotta image of Sūrya portrayed on the Hadipur Seal is to be taken as falling within this third form in its very nascent stage in ancient Bengal. The northerner's dress (*udīcyaveśa*) happens to be the greatest feature of this form of solar iconography. The stress is mainly laid on the close covering of the god's body with a coat of mail and his wearing the *avyaṅga* and the boots (*upānat-pinaddha padayugalam* of later texts) together with such other attributes as lotus-flowers with stalk, a crown, ornamented earrings, long necklace etc.

The intimate connection of the east Irānian mode of Sun worship with the remodeled solar cult in northern India is further heightened during the time of Varāhamihira. He lays down (*Bṛhat saṁhitā,* Ch. 59, V.19) that it was the Magas who were entitled to install ceremonially the images of Sūrya in temples.[43] That the Maga Brāhmaṇas were held in high esteem and reverence also by the people of ancient Bengal is evidenced by a fragmentary Kharosṭhī inscription in a terracotta potsherd[44] from Chandraketugarh (North 24 Parganas) of c. late last or early second century A. D. The Inscription[45] has been read by B.N. Mukherjee as *"ja'adha makatreke vajtra dvr (I) je dhadh (e) (=Jayanto-Makataḥ eko vastraḥ dvijaḥ)"*. It has been suggested about a victorious Brāhmaṇa from Maka called Vastra (Vajtra) and the victory is relating to the theological discourses.[46] That the Sun worshippers were not used to accept discomfiture at the hand of the proponents of other sects is evident from the fact that Śaṅkarācārya had to face the Sun-worshippers in the Deccan. In view of the discovery of *udīcyaveśī* Sūrya images in early Bengal as well as of the relevant reference in contemporary inscription, it may be said that the victorious Brāhmaṇa was no other a than a Maga priest who must have come to Bengal and install ceremonially the images of the Sun god. Interestingly, the inscription in question was written in the Kharoṣṭhī language only while the others found in ancient Vaṅga are mostly written in the Brāhmī and Brāhmī-Kharoṣṭī script. This also points to the introduction of the northerner type of solar icons in Bengal by its new settlers who had brought the Maga priests along with them or invited them in the succeeding ages to officiate in Sun worship.

In the innovatory process of solar iconography, the Sun image illustrates the next significant stage not only in early Bengal but also in other places of the country. The transformation began with denuding the torso of the god of the *udīcyaveśa* without sacrificing the artistic beauty. The lower part of the *udīcyaveśa* as well as the booted feet lost its significance before the high-pitched tempo of a total Indianised version of the icon. This very style constitutes the final stage in the evolutionary process of the iconic representation of Sūrya in ancient Vaṅga. The composite figure showing the Sūrya image of the fifth century A.D. from Indian Museum and the Kashipur (North 24 Parganas) Sūrya image of the seventh century A.D. include northerner's dress, though the *avyaṅga* (waist-girdle) and the booted feet are retained in all the cases. The next stage in the evolution of solar icons was greater amplification and embellishment of the Sun-figure and the depiction of more number of his attendants. The bluish basalt stone-image of Sūrya (e. sixth century A.D.) found at Deorā in the district of Bogra is the appropriate example of this category.[47]

Anyway, the Sun god seems to have enjoyed, like Indra and Agni, wide popularity in ancient Vaṅga, possibly among the various strata of the society during the post-Mauryan and pre-Gupta period. This becomes evident from the wide availability of contemporary terracotta icons of the god in lower West Bengal. In an agriculture-based society, the importance of the Sun worship could not have been of lesser degree indeed. It is said in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (54.5) that the oblation offered to Agni is received by the Sun who in turn gives birth to rain. Rain produces food and the food (so begotten) sustains the people.

II

Sun worship, which was very much popular in ancient Vaṅga during the post-Maurya and pre-Gupta period, did not die out with the passage of time. The popularity of Sun worship in ancient Vaṅga extended further into the other parts of Bengal in the early days of the Gupta age.[48]

The Guptas were staunch followers of Brāhmaṇism and at the time of their reign, Paurāṇic Brāhmaṇism was emerging and starting to spread all over India. It is believed that some of the major Purāṇas like the *Vāyu, Viṣṇu* and *Matsya* were composed during this period and Paurāṇic gods and goddesses were being worshipped. The age witnessed the granting of land to Brāhmaṇas, various Brāhmaṇical sacrifices, the vogue of worship of Purāṇic deities and the founding of new settlement of Brāhmaṇas. Bengal remained under the Gupta rule up to the middle or the end of the sixth century A.D., the centre of this region of their realm being the *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti*. Commercial prosperity in this land reached its pinnacle in this very age. As a part of the political and economic unity of the Gupta Empire, Bengal was affected by the strong-flowing stream of religion and culture from all over India. The epigraphic records of the Gupta period found in north

Bengal at places like Dhanāidaha,[49] Baigrām,[50] Kalāikuri,[51] Dāmodarpur,[52] and Pāhārpur[53] contain names of a large number of Brāhmaṇas settled in Bengal. Of them, some belonged to the Ṛgvedic School and others to Yajurvedic or Sāmavedic Schools. Most of these Gupta epigraphs record grants of lands to the Brāhmaṇas; the purpose of a grant used to be the performance of the *Agnihotra* rites or the *Pañcha-mahāyajña* sacrifices or construction and renovation of a temple for the regular daily service and worship of the deity. In the sixth century A.D., the current of Vedic religion and culture had reached the easternmost borders of Bengal. We learn from the Nidhanpur Copper Plate inscription (648 A.D.) of Bhāskaravarmā that during the reign of Bhūtivarmā, more than two hundred Brāhmaṇa families belonging to various *gotras* and Vedic *Śākhās* were settled in Pañcakhanda village in Śrīhatta district. The Lokanātha edict of the seventh century A.D. reveals that in Samataṭa, the jungle had been cleared for a new settlement and all who resided there were Brāhmaṇas versed in the four *Vedas*.

With the spread of the Vedic Brāhmaṇism everywhere in Bengal, the cult of Vedic Sun god Savitā was brought in by the Brāhmaṇas along with their daily programme of rituals and prayers. Every twice-born householder is enjoined to perform the *Sandhyopāsanā*, a form of Sun worship by muttering the *Gāyatrī Mantra* with facing towards the east in the morning and the north-east in the evening.[54] It is also prescribed to offer an *arghya* to the Sun.[55] As the *Sandhyā* was to be performed in accordance with the method laid down in the *Gṛhyasūtras* and *Dharmasūtraṣ* every day by every Brāhmaṇa, it may be presumed that the worship of the Sun in its spiritualized form was a very significant aspect of societal life in the Gupta era too.

References are found in the Gupta inscriptions to the worship of the Sun god.[56] The earliest inscriptional evidence for the worship of the Sun in early Bengal comes from Puṇḍravardhana. In the Jagadishpur (Rajshāhi) copper plate of 123 Gupta era (447 A.D.) issued from Pūrṇakauśikā, the headquarters of Śṛṅgaveravīthī, it is mentioned that three residents — Kṣemārka, Bhoyila and Mahīdāsa — had permanently donated lands for the construction of a temple for the thousand-rayed god (*Sahasraraśmi*) Sūrya and also for the expenses for supply of the offerings and oblations consisting of rice, milk and sugar (boiled together), and other charitable deeds, and lastly for the counter-reformation of *khaṇḍa-phutta* as well as for the supply of perfume, incense and oil etc.[57]

The temple of the '*Sahasraraśmī* (the Sun) was established in the village named Gulmagandhikā adjacent to the Jaina Vihāra.[58] in *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti*. The inscription also mentions the name of *Sāmbapura* where the temple was situated. Sāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa by Jāmbavatī, is connected with the worship of the Sun in the Purāṇas.[59] *Sāmbapura* is another name of *Mūlasthāna* (present Multan in Sind) where Sāmba constructed a Sun temple at Candrabhāgā (modern Chenub in the Punjab), brought eighteen families of the Magas from Śākadvīpa for the office of the priest of the temple and worshipped the Sun god to get cured of leprosy. The import of the Maga Brāhmaṇas into India by Sāmba from Śākadvīpa is also referred to in the

Govindapur (Gayā District) stone inscription of poet Gaṅgādhara dated the Śaka year 1059 (=1137-38 A.D.).[60] It seems from the name of the place mentioned in the Jagdishpur inscription that Sāmba myth was well established in the tradition of Bengal at least from the Gupta period.

The Jagadishpur copper plate is an important religious document throwing light on Sun-worship in the temple. Here the temple construction and the solar worship by means of the oblations of rice, milk and sugar, perfume, incense, lamp etc. before a Sun image is done by the indigenous peoples of India – probably the Vaiśyas. Besides Irānian Magas, the Indians of even orthodox tradition were not far behind in following the practices of worship of the Sun in image and in temple. The name of the Sun god for whom the temple was constructed is purely indigenous, *i.e. Sahasraraśmi* and not Irānian Mithra. Thus by the middle of the fifth century A.D. a full-fledged solar sect with all the Paraphernalia of a temple, image, priesthood, rites and procedures had come into vogue and Sun worship was widely practiced in this part of Bengal. Moreover, the inscription further tends us to believe that it is the earliest evidence for the existence of a Sun temple in Bengal. This monument of the Sun cult was a result of the collective effort of three residents – a fact that shows that there had been a group of followers of the Sun sect in *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti* as early as the first half of the fifth century A.D. Since the indigenous name of *Sahasraraśmi* is used in it, it appears that there has been indigenous tradition of Sun temples – a fact that has also been brought to light by the Indor Copper Plate Inscription of Skandagupta (465-466 A.D.).[61]

It appears that from the Gupta period onwards, the Sūrya worship of a purely northern culture brought into India by Irānian and Scythian invaders became very widespread in Bengal. This deity was not exclusively related to the Vedic concept of Sūrya, but rather to the idea and ritual of a Sūrya of popular belief.[62]

There is sculptural evidence to testify to the wide prevalence and the nature of the Sun worship in the Gupta period onward. The earliest Sun images in India belonging to the Gupta period have been discovered from Kumarpur[63] and Niyamatpur,[64] both in the Rajshāhi district, north Bengal, which is roughly the Puṇḍravardhana of ancient times. In both the sculptures, the god is accompanied by his two attendants, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala. The Kumarpur relief shows the god wearing long tunic, flat and low head dress, while in the Niyamatpur relief, the god is dressed in a flat cap and a long tunic fastened to the waist by a belt. In the Kumarpur relief, there are seven horses of the Sun's chariot, which marks a departure in the subcontinent from the custom of Kuṣāṇa artists to provide the *Sūrya-ratha* with only two or four horses. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[65] speaks of seven horses and one *cakra* for the chariot of the Sun god. In all the iconographic texts of India, the number of horses in the Sun's chariot is given as seven. In the Niyamatpur relief, the horses are conspicuous by their absence. The wheel of the chariot, the two female attendants of the god and his consorts are absent in both the above images. Most probably, the sculptors of these icons followed a text like the *Bṛhat-Saṁhitā*, which described the

Sun god alone without any reference to his chariot, horses or attendants.[66] A remarkable innovation is the scarf or belt introduced for the first time in these two images. Both the Sūrya images unmistakably reveal the glittering traces of the iconographic features of the Kuṣāṇa period in dress and general characteristics. Another interesting development of the sun images in the Kuṣāṇa period is the posture of the images, which are of two types – seated and *bhadrāsana*. Gupta age witnessed a new more variety of the standing type. Seated images of the Sun god are indeed very rare. A miniature bronze Sun image of seated type belonging to the seventh or eighth century A.D., was found along with an inscribed image of the goddess Sarvāṇī set up by Prabhāvatī, the queen of the Buddhist Devakhaḍga, from some ruins in the village of Deulbāḍī, Comilla. The image follows the Deorā composition in many of its details. We may deduce some important information of Sun worship from the Deulbāḍī icon. No doubt, the Sun god received worship from the Buddhists and that too sometimes simultaneously with Brāhmaṇical deities like Sarvāṇī (Umā or Durgā), the devoted wife of Śiva. The latter fact definitely points to some sort of syncretism in the society. Most probably, the *rogaharttā* aspect of Sūrya was responsible for his wide acceptance among the people of different creeds. Secondly, it is also beyond doubt that in addition to worship in temple, the images of the god was also adored by individuals in their houses in image form. It may be reasonably held that the Sauras or the devotees of Sūrya meant these images from north Bengal for worship of the god. However, in the light of the above, it appears that even in the midst of dominant alien influences in the solar iconography, gradually, there began a conscious endeavour for idealization and Indianization of the Sun images in the early Gupta age.

Widespread prevalence of the Sun cult all over Bengal from the late Gupta period is substantiated by a number of inscriptions as well as by the discovery of numerous stone sculptures. Indigenous elements in solar iconography are found to have proceeded further in the late Gupta times. The Sun image from Deorā (Bogra)[67] definitely shows some development in the iconic type of Sūrya.

III

Sun worship was not confined only to Puṇḍravardhana or Vaṅga but equally in vogue in Vardhamāna-bhukti, *i.e.* Uttara-Rāḍha and Daṇḍabhukti-maṇḍalas. The Mallasārul Copper Plate inscription[68] (of Vijayasena) of the time of Gopacandra (Regnal Year 3 i.e. 543 A.D.) from Vardhamāna-bhukti refers to *Lokanātha-dharma*, which is identified with the Sun god. The inscription begins with an invocation to Śrī Lokanātha.[69] The epigraph is attached with a seal that bears in relief a standing two-armed figure with a *cakra* in the background. Scholars are not unanimous regarding the identification of the deity represented on the seal. D.C. Sircar[70] holds that Vijayasena was, in all probability, a Buddhist and the *cakra* or the wheel, therefore, represents the *Dharma-cakra* or the wheel of Law and the deity appearing in front of the *cakra* is Śrī Lokanātha, *i.e.* the Buddha. However, Sukumar Sen is of opinion that the seal of Vijayasena actually depicts an effigy of Dharma Sūrya with the wheel of time (*Kāla Cakra*) in the background and emblems of horse in front. Dr. Sen[71] has also suggested that Lokanātha in Bengal appeared in the role of a god around whom the *bhakti* movement got an impetus. However, the identification of the god in question ought to be considered in the religious background of the sixth century A.D. Bengal. The Gupta rule in Bengal from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the sixth century A.D., no doubt, patronized the Vedic as well as Paurāṇic religion. The Buddhist trend in the religious life of Bengal was ushered in under the patronage of the Pālas sometime about the middle of the eight century A.D. Therefore, it would be rather hazardous to conclude that a seal of the sixth century A.D. from ancient *Rāḍha* should represent a Buddhist symbol or deity. Of course, we have to bear in mind that the effigy of the god in front of the wheel bears resemblance neither with any Buddhist deity nor with any Brāhmaṇical god. In spite of that, it is no less significant to study the seal along with the first two lines of the inscriptions where *Śrī Lokanātha* has been equated with *Dharma*. There is least doubt that *Dharma* was recognized for long as the Sun god by the Niṣādas or the Austric-speaking original inhabitants of Bengal.[72] Besides, the *Dharmamaṅgala Kāvyas*, which were composed at a later date in Rāḍha, record the earliest tradition of worshipping the Sun god with the name of *Dharma*.[73] Vijayasena, to whom the Mallasārul seal belongs, started his career as a feudatory under Mahārāja Vainyagupta who was a devotee of Śiva and later shifted his allegiance to Gopacandra. It may, therefore, be held that he was a resident of Bengal for quite a long time and had an opportunity to be conversant with the religious tradition of this country. It is no wonder that he should have upheld the worship of *Lokanātha-dharma* associated with the Brāhmaṇical belief. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the Mahāyāna god *Avalokiteśvara* was named *Lokanātha* in Bengal and was associated with the primitive god *Dharma* in course of time. The synthesis thus forged, it is believed, contributed ultimately to the growth of the concept of *bhakti* centering round Sūrya.

We have already noted the familiarity of Bengal with the Sāmba legend in respect of Sun worship. The tradition of Sāmba's disease and cure after wooing the solar deity is again found to have played an important role in the first half of the seventh century A.D. when the key person in Bengal was Śaśāṅka, the first historical ruler of Gauḍa. The Chinese Buddhist monk Hiuen Tsang portrayed Śaśāṅka as a persecutor of the Buddhists. While traveling in Magadha in 637-38 A.D., he noted[74] that in recent times, Śaśāṅka had cut down the Bodhi tree at Gayā and ordered for taking away of the Buddha image in a nearby shrine. He also added that on hearing the execution of his order, Śaśāṅka was seized with fear, his body produced sores and his flesh peeled off causing his death. An echo is heard in the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, a later text of a Buddhist writer, of the story of Śaśāṅka's destruction of the Bodhi tree and his consequent death. The same story of Śaśāṅka's disease is preserved in medieval genealogical (*Kulajī*) works of Bengal Brāhmaṇas.[75] According to the tradition preserved among the *Nadiā Vaṅga Grahavipra Samāja* as well as the *Varendra Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas*, twelve Brāhmaṇas living on the banks of the Sarayū river were brought by king Śaśāṅka to Gauḍa in order to cure himself of an incurable disease by offering sacrifices to the planets (*graha-yajña*). According to this tradition, Śaśāṅka was healed and rewarded the Brāhmaṇas who then settled in Gauḍa at his request. These Brāhmaṇas, known as *Grahavipra* and settled in Rāḍha and Vaṅga, came to be divided into several sections according to the places of their residence. Given the authenticity of the *Kulaji* texts, it may safely be said that the *Grahayajña*, a component part of the solar religion, was immensely popular in Bengal in the seventh century A.D. as a means of cure from disease so much, so that a great king and a devotee of Śiva like Śaśāṅka found it advisable to resort to it. The legend also points to the occasional immigration of the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas to Bengal from Upper India, who presumably popularized the worship of the Sun images and the nine planets by taking advantage of the people's belief in the Sun as the remover of all diseases (*samasta-rogāṇāṁ harttā'*).

In addition to the worship of the nine planets, the Sun god continued to receive adoration in the form of *Dharma* as well. The god finds a very reverent mention as the *Dharma* in the Mallasārul Copper Plate and the Nidhanpur inscription[76] of Bhāskaravarman, issued from Karṇasuvarṇa[77] sometime after the death of Harṣavardhana in 647 A.D. Herein Bhāskaravarman has been compared with *Bhāskara* (*Bhāskaramiva tejasāṁ nilayam*) and his rise has been equaled with that of the '*Bhuvanapati*' i.e. the Sun.[78] The king, like Sūrya who takes away darkness from the world, spread the eternal light of the *Āryadharma* by removing the accumulated darkness of the *Kaliyuga*.

IV

Pāla Period: Epigraphic Evidences

The stream of the Vedic religion became gradually stronger during the rule of the Pāla-Candra-Kambojas, though they were ardent followers of Buddhism. In fact, all the Pāla kings were prominent patrons of Brāhmaṇas, Brāhmaṇical images and temples and therefore, made grants of lands for them to enhance their own virtue and renown. Prabhāvatī, the queen of the Buddhist Devakhadga, set up an image of the goddess Sarvāṇī (Durgā) with which was found a seated bronze image of Sūrya. A number of inscriptions from the Pāla and Candra age inform that from different parts of India such as Lāṭa (South Gujarat),[79] Madhyadeśa, Krodañja (Kolāñcha), Muktāvastu and especially central India, Brāhmaṇas of various *Gotra-pravara* and various Vedic branches as well as Brāhmaṇas observing the Vedic sacraments came to settle in Bengal. We are also told that many of the Brāhmaṇas who were granted land were most erudite in the *Vedas* and their six branches and proficient in the execution of the Vedic sacrifices and similar rituals. Reference may be made to the Munger inscription of Devapāla, the Badal Pillar inscription[80] as well as the Bhagalpur Copper Plate inscription[81] of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla and the Bāṅgadh inscription of Mahīpāla. Mention is made in many inscriptions of the Vedic sacrifices and the *homa* oblation. In this period, Pūrāṇic grandeur outshone that of this Vedic religion and tradition. The climate of the Vedic religious ritual pervaded the Candra period as well. There are a number of distinct references to the Brāhmaṇas of the different branches of the *Vedas* and to the Vedic oblations and sacrifices. It would seem that the royal officer of the Buddhist Candra and Kamboja regimes called *ritvika* or family priest, in fact, celebrated the Vedic oblations and sacrifices.

That the Sun god was regularly and devotedly worshipped by a large number of orthodox Brāhmaṇas by means of *Sandhyopāsanā* is beyond any doubt. Sun god and his worship find frequent mention in the contemporary inscriptions too. In some cases, it is mentioned directly while in many more cases his greatness is suggested by way of his comparision with some contemporary dignitaries. This comparative reference is immensely indicative of his respectful position in the mind of the people as well. In verse eight of the Bāṅgadh (Dinajpur) Copper Plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I (988-1023 A.D.), Gopāladeva, son of Rājyapāla and Bhāgyadevī, has been equated with the Sun, the repository of luminosity, produced by the eastern mountains ('*tasmāt pūrvakṣitighrānnidhiriva*').[82] It is worth mentioning that the Ṛgvedic description (I.50.4-8) of the Sun as the source of the light has been repeated here. The Gayā (Kṛṣṇadvārikā Temple) Stone Inscription of the time of Nayapāladeva (1038-1055 A.D.) refers to Viśvāditya, son of Śūdraka, as prosperous and endowed with blazing personality as the Sun high up in the sky and sending terrific heat.[83] In another place, the splendour of *Bhāskara* has been attributed to Viśvāditya possessed of unending qualities ('*tejasvitā bhāsvati*'). Atmospheric aspect of the Sun becomes prominent here again. In the contemporary Bāṅgadh Praśasti of Mūrti-Śiva, 'Bhānu' (the Sun) shining above the lofty shrine of the Mūrti-Śiva has been described as a golden pitcher.[84] The form of the Sun as a red round orb combined with his role as the rain-giver has certainly contributed to such depiction.

In Verse 1 of the Sian (Birbhum) Stone Inscription (approx. 1043 A.D.) Sūrya has been described as the right eye of Viṣṇu ('*pravodhanidre jagatāṁ yasyonmīlanmīlane*').[85] Analogous descriptions are also found in Verse 2 of the Kamauli copper Plate of Vaidyadeva. In the Vedic literature,[86] Sūrya has been described as the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa as well as the soul of all – movable and stationary.[87] However, here the inscription refers to the Sun as the eye of such a deity who, in the *Ṛgveda*, appears as an insignificant aspect of the former. This small epigraphic data is extremely important in understanding the relative position of both Sūrya and Viṣṇu in the contemporary society. It is evident that in the eleventh century A.D. itself began the process of eclipse of Sūrya by Viṣṇu, whose cult seems to have become most popular in Bengal, at least during the last two or three centuries of the Hindu rule, if we are to judge by the number of cult images which mostly belong to this period. Presumably, the Sun cult was growing inwardly weak because of various factors[88] and consequently being subjected to aggression of Vaiṣṇavism that perhaps did not like the separate existence of the parent cult, especially in view of the latter's championing by the priests of the foreign origin.

However, the inscription in question gives us some tremendously important hints about the popularity of Sun worship in the *Rāḍha-janapada*. It appears from Verse 17 that the king had made a gift of a chariot for a certain shrine of the solar deity. Here is a reference to something similar to a moving victory-pillar given by the king (*Viśrāmārthamivaiṣa jaṅgama-jayastambho vabhau yo'rpitaḥ'*). The term '*viśrāmārtham*' probably implies that when tired, the horses of the Sun's chariot will take rest for a while at the peak of the temple.[89] Anyway, the '*ratha*' might have been presented for the annual solar car-festival (*Rathayātrā*) an account of which is found in the *Sāmba Purāṇa.* (34.14 ff). We learn from the *Skanda Purāṇa.* (Ch. 43, Verse 33) that at Ujjayinī, the *Rathayātrā* was performed twice in a year, one known as *Āṣāḍha* held in the month *Āṣāḍha* (June-July) and the other called *Kārtikī* held in the month of *Kārttika* (October-November) On these two occasions, a great fair was held at the temple and people from different parts of the country took part in it. Something similar might have been in vogue in this case as well. In another verse (No.46), we get an indirect reference to a gigantic temple of the Sun god because this religious structure has been conceived as the palace of Sūrya where he would stay abandoning the abode of the heaven.[90] In addition, there are also references to the offering of golden lotus for the *Navagrahas* and silver lotus for the Sun (*i.e. Candāṁśu*).[91] The gift of lotus made of a precious metal like silver and the use of gold in making the images of Sūrya as well as the *Navagrahas* presuppose the fact that the god and the nine planets were worshipped by a section of wealthy people. Gold and silver are the best materials for making the Sun images,[92] other five being copper, earth, stone, wood and paint. Yājñavalkya has also prescribed the use of silver as one of the materials for making the images of the *Navagrahas.* Therefore, the Sian inscription gives a good deal of information concerning Sun worship in the Rāḍha region.

Towards the end of the Pāla period, Sun worship gained immense popularity among the Brāhmaṇa rulers of Gayā. The Gayā Gadādhar Temple Inscription[93] of the time of Nayapāla begins with "*Om namo mārttaṇḍāya*" and the first verse is devoted to the Sun as well. The founder of the temple apparently was a *Parama-saura.* Similarly, when the issuer was a follower of Śiva, he assumed the title Parama-Maheśvara as we come across the case of Vijayasena of the Deopara Praśasti, which begins with the salutation to Śiva, i.e. '*Om om namaḥ śivāya*'. The Madhainagar Copperplate of *Parama-Vaiṣṇava* Lakṣmaṇasena commences with '*Om om namo Nārāyaṇaya*'. It is known from the Gayā Akṣayavaṭa Temple Inscription of Viśvarūpa Viśvāditya (a feudatory of the Pālas) incised in the regal year 5 of Vigrahapāla III (1043-70 A.D.), which begins with adoration to Śiva, informs that the image of *Śuklabhānu* (Sūrya) was installed in the temple of the *Prapitāmaheśvara* (Brahmā) at Gayā together with the icons of *Gaṇeśa, Kanakeśvara, Ambujabhava, Virvarūpeśvara, Gaṅgeśa, Gadādhara, Gṛdhreṣa, Sujanārdana* and *Vaṭeśa.*[94] It is evident that the Sun god was looked upon absolutely as equal to the gods of the major cults and worshipped by other sects as well.

The Gayā Sitalā Temple Inscription[95] of Yakṣapāla[96] of the time of Govindapāla (1161-1165 A.D.) also begins with "*Om namaḥ Sūryāya*", and here also the first verse is dedicated to the Sun god — *"Viṣaya-madhutkara-pūrṇa prāṇinikāyāliṁ viśva-śatapattram/ aṣṭāśā-dala-ramyāṁ prakāśayannavatu vo bhānuḥ"* (V.1). On the ground cited above, it can safely be concluded that Yakṣapāla was also a *Parama-saura. Sūryavandanā* in the

Maṅgalācaraṇa and *Sūrya-praṇāma* as we come across in the present inscription seems to have been popular since the days of the *Ṛgveda.* The inscription in question also refers to the construction of a temple where the images of *Maunāditya, Sahasraliṅga, Kamalārdhāṅgīna-Nārāyaṇa, Someśvara* (twice), *Phalgunātha, Vijayāditya* and *Kedāreśvara* were installed.[97] Of the names of the gods just mentioned, *Maunāditya* and *Vijayāditya* appear to be other names of Sūrya.

In the Mainamati Plate of Govindacandra (1020 -1055 A.D.) of the contemporary Candra dynasty, the king has been described as shining as the *Pracaṇḍaraśmi* Sūrya.[97] In the Ramganj Copperplate of Īśvaraghoṣa (1040 - 1080 A.D.), a contemporary of Vigrahapāla III, Balaghoṣa, Dhavalaghoṣa and Mahāmaṇḍalika Iśvaraghoṣa – all three have been described as (well-known/veritable as) the Sun.[99] It appears that this royal family endeavoured to depict them as belonging to the solar race. In the Bhuvaneśvar Inscription of Bhaṭṭa-Bhavadeva (1073 -1127 A.D), minister of Harivarmandeva of the Varman dynasty, Bhavadeva, the founder of the family, has been described as a giver of fruit like the Sun (*kalaśya dātāpi tāpanapratimaḥ* — Verse 5).[100] In the Kamauli Plate of Vaidyadeva,[101] Sūrya has not only been described as the right eye of Hari, but also used at several places as the object of comparison under different names such as '*Bhānu*' (Verse 10), '*Arkadeva*', '*Mārttaṇḍa*' ("*sākṣāt divaspativikramaḥ,*" — verse 14) or '*dinapati*' ("*ūjirtairdinapatiḥ,* — verse 19). The inscription further informs that the Pāla king Vigrahapāla was born in the family of the Sun, the right eye of Hari (*etasya dakṣiṇadriśo vaṁse mihirasya jātavān pūrvam*). We have already noticed in the Sian inscription (*Supra,* p. 109) the similar epithet about the Sun.

The Kamauli Plate leads us to presume that the Pāla kings had belonged to the solar dynasty.[102] In the *Rāmacarita* (I. 4) of Sandhyākara Nandī, Dharmapāla is described as 'the light of Samudra's race' *(samudra-kula-dīpa) i.e.,* descended from the ocean.[103] However, both the records belong to the very end of the Pāla age; naturally, very little weight may be given to the theories put forward by them about the origin of the Pāla Royal family. Besides, the membership of the solar or lunar dynasty was usually claimed for most of the contemporary dynasties and there is nothing distinctive about it. Nevertheless, the *Samudra* theory of origin is certainly a novel one, a distant echo of which may also be heard in an old Bengali text called *Dharma-Maṅgala* of Ghanarāma.[104] It tells about the exile of Dharmapāla's queen Vallabhādevī to forest because of sonlessness, where her relationship with the ocean gave birth to a son.

According to Tārānātha, Gopāla was succeeded by a son who was begotten by Nāgarāja Sagarapāla, the sovereign of the ocean, on his younger queen.[105] This is evidently another version of the Pāla origin from *samudra* or ocean. R.D. Banerji in his endeavour to interpret '*Samudra-kula*' rationally says that the Pālas came from the sea.[106] However, reconciliation has been attempted between the two different traditions of *Samudra* and *Sūrya* origin by holding that *Samudra-kula* means *Sūrya-kula* or solar race to which Samudra, the son of the mythical king Sagara, belonged.[107]

In the 11th-12th centuries A.D., the Vedic religion made a great headway under the patronage of the Varman and Sena rulers. The beginnings of the transformation had become quite evident towards the end of the Pāla and Kamboja era. From the second half of the eleventh century A.D., the descendants of the Buddhist Pāla kings gradually took to Brāhmaṇism. More and more Brāhmanas emigrated from the Central regions. Contemporary literary as well as epigraphical source materials throw light on the revival of the Brāhmaṇical ideals, rites, rituals and other socio-religious activities.

The Bhuvaneśwar Inscription of Bhaṭṭa-Bhavadeva, minister of the Varman king Harivarman (1073-1127 A.D.),[108] refers to hundred villages inhabited by the Brāhmaṇas versed in the Vedic lore. The Belava (Bhagalpur) Copper Plate (1142 A.D) of Bhojavarman (1137-1145 A.D.)[108] refers to the grant of land in Puṇḍravardhana to the Brāhmaṇas who hailed from Uttara Rāḍha and were attached to the study of the Vedas. The Varman rulers are known to have been great patrons of three Vedas.

In the inscriptions belonging to the Sena rulers, we find references to the Brāhmaṇas belonging to the Vedic *Śākhās* like *Kauthumī, Āśvalāyana, Kāṇṇa* and *Paippalāda.* The Barrackpore (24-Parganas) Copper Plate grant (1159 A.D.) of Vijayasena[110] records the donation of lands in the Khāḍi Viṣaya of *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti* to the priests who performed *Kanakatulā Puruṣa Mahādāna* on behalf of the chief queen Vilāsadevī on the day of lunar eclipse. The Naihati Copper grant of Vallālasena[111] (1159 -1179 A.D.) records the donation of land to *Ācārya Vāsudevaśarman* for supervision of *Hemasya Mahādāna* on the bank of the river Gaṅgā during a solar eclipse. The Tarpandighi (Balurghat, South Dinajpur) Copper Plate grant[112] (1181 A.D.) of Lakṣmaṇasena records the donation of a village in Varendrī to Ācārya Īśvara Devaśarman as fee for his service in the *Hiraṇyasya Mahādāna.* Again, the Madhainagar (Pabna district) Copper-plate grant (1204 A.D.) of Lakṣmaṇasena[113] records donation of land made by the king for use of the priest who seems to have acted as the supervisor or the proprietary for *Aindri Śānti.* It is, thus, evident that most of the Sena records were land grants made to the Brāhmaṇas on some specific occasions of rites and rituals. Anyway, there is no room for doubt that the Sun god received adoration from those orthodox Brāhmaṇas by traditional way of *Sandhyopāsanā* along with the muttering of *Gāyatrī.* In *Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva*[114] of Halāyudha Miśra, it is found that the Brāhmaṇas in Bengal were very much unwilling to study the Vedic *mantras* with much curiosity and solemnity. Nevertheless, the special command over the Vedas attributed to the family of Gurava Miśra speaks quite differently. The Sun god began to be worshipped according to the Vedic injunctions in the natural solar form, as the repository of light, heat and all energies that sustain the living world. With the gradual expansion of the Brāhmaṇical settlements in Bengal, there remains little scope of doubt that the cult of the Sun god in its Vedic form made its appearance. In addition to the Brāhmaṇas, the upper-caste Hindus, at least to some extent, had Vedic sacrifices performed and the Vedas recited, mainly due to the inspiration and assistance of ritualistic Brāhmaṇas who had come from the west.[115]

Abundantly available are the references — both direct and indirect — to Sun worship in inscriptions during the Sena period. In verse 8 of the Barrackpore (District 24 Parganas) Copper Plate of Vijayasena, dated in the year 62 (=1158 A.D.), Vijayasena has been described as the dazzling Sun on the top of the Golden mountain – "*kanakagiriśirovarti-mārtaṇḍatejāḥ.*" In verse 5, Hemantasena has also been described as having become like the Sun an object of veneration for the (three) worlds – "*Raviriva jagataṁ mānanīyo babhūva*".[116] The Naihati Copper grant of Vallālasena[117] (1159-1179 A.D.) refers to the performance of the *Hemāsya Mahādāna Yajña* by Vilāsadevī, mother of Vallālasena on the bank of the Ganges on the occasion of a solar eclipse. We learn from the Sanokhar Inscription of the regal year 9 of Vallālasena, incised on a copper case that the case was gifted by the chief priest of the temple for the setting up of a Sun-image.[118]

Viśvarūpasena (son of Lakṣmaṇasena) and his son Sūryasena were staunch devotees of Sūrya and it was in this period that Sūrya worship was further enhanced. The affiliation of these two kings to the solar cult in addition to the religious faith of their predecessors is quite significant. Viśvarūpasena is said to have been seriously sick or made captive, resulting in his abdicating the throne in 1210 A.D. in favour of Sūryasena and again ascending the same five years later.[119] The possibility of prolonged and severe ailment of Viśvarūpasena seems to be most probable, which impelled him to profess the cult of Sūrya who has been described in the Bairhaṭṭā image inscription as the remover of all diseases ("*samasta-rogānāṁ harttā*").[120]

In fact, a large number of Copperplate inscriptions[121] begin with an invocation of the God Nārāyaṇa, the Sun and the Moon. The Sun god is described as the "friend of lotus-beds, the source of deliverance of the three worlds withheld in the prison of darkness and the wonderful bird of the tree of the Vedas, soaring high up on his two alternately expanding white and black wings, of which one is white and the other black (*i.e.* the two fortnights)". Similar description of the Sun represents the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* line of Sun worship that was going on parallel with his worship in image. The kings' preference for this mode of Sun worship may be seen as indicative of a strong undercurrent against the prevailing practice of worshipping the god anthropomorphically. It is worth mentioning that Viśvarūpasena has described himself as a devout worshipper of the Sun god (*Parama-saura*) in his two inscriptions. Even the *Parama-Vaiṣṇava* Lakṣmaṇasena has been described as *Parama-Saura* in the Madanpāḍā inscription. Evidently, it is nothing but a traditional attempt to associate one's predecessor with his own religious faith. Sūryasena, like his father, has also identified himself as the *Parama-saura*. Both of them have been described as "*Senakula-kamalavikāśa-bhāskara*".

Varman-Sena Age : *Literary evidences*

Sun worship finds ample references in the contemporary religious and secular literary texts. There are many euological verses around the Sun in the *Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa*, an anthology compiled by the Buddhist abbot Vidyākara who appears to have flourished in Bengal towards the first quarter of the twelfth century A.D. The position that the anthologist accorded to the section on Sun immediately after those on Śiva and Viṣṇu shows that he considered the Sun to be one of the chief divinities of Hinduism. There is also abundant evidence in inscriptions and literary texts that by his time the Vedic worship of the Sun had grown into an important cult, strengthened by influences from the Sun worship of Persia. The four verses, which Vidyākara quotes, all refer to the Sun at sunrise, which is the time when all Hindus, regardless of sect, address their prayers to the heavenly body. More verses on the Sun are found in the non-religious sections such as in Section 9 on 'Summer' and Section 27 on 'Sunset'. With a view to illustrating the concept of Sūrya as held by a few poets, though belonging to different ages, all the four verses mentioned in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* are as follows.[121]

(a) *"The sharp-rayed Sun, driving with horses*
over and below the endless world,
whose disc thereby moves swiftly as a whirling brand,
I pray may aid you by his casting out all darkness
with his shafts of light as warlike
as burning spears of gold".

Rājaśekhara, verse no.148

(b) *I praise the disc of the rising Sun,*
red as a parrot's beak sharp-rayed,
friend of the lotus grove
an earring for the goddess of the east.

Vidyā, verse no. 149

(c) *Praise to the Sun,*
a gem in the serpent's hood that is the Eastern Hill,
a golden flower in the sapphire-tree of heaven;
a farewell bowl for the captain-saint
who sets out to cross the sea of transmigration.

Varāhamihira, verse no. 150

(d) *The Sun grows steadily from its watered root*
by reason of the ambrosia poured from her moon-bowl by Night
as by a gardener girl desiring a new garden,
in fact, the world.
As it grows from its trench,
The Eastern Mountain's ring of peaks,
red as fresh coral, may it bring you joy,
this first sprout of the tree of day.

Mayūra, verse no. 151

A number of verses of different poets on the Sun occur in the *Devapravāha* (Section on gods) of the *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta* (1206 A.D.),[123] an anthology compiled by Śrīdharadāsa under the patronage of Lakṣmaṇasena. This, no doubt, points to an important position of the Sun god in the prevailing religious horizon. In a verse (V.16.1) of Umāpatidhara, a fellow poet of Jayadeva in the court of Lakṣmaṇasena, quoted in the *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta* (1206 A.D.), salutation has been made to the east filled with fragrance, which constitutes a clear reference to *Sūrya-praṇāma*, a popular mode of Sun worship since the Ṛgvedic age. Another verse (IV.6.5) of the same poet says eulogizing the Sun that *Bhagavāna Sūrya* who beautifies all his lotuses simultaneously along with waking all up, is to be worshipped, even though he is heated.[124] Dhoyī, a court-poet of Lakṣmaṇasena, refers to the Sun temple at (Triveṇī), while directing the messenger wind to salute the Sun god ('*Raghukulaguru*') and offer water to him on the bank of the river Ganges before departing from there.[125] Halāyudha, a well-known writer in the history of the *Smṛti* digests of Bengal and a contemporary of Lakṣmaṇasena, has showered a eulogy of the Sun god in the *Maṅgalācaraṇa* of his *Brāhmaṇa-sarvasya* thus: "I eulogize the *bharga* (*tejaḥ*) of Savitā that gives light, like a lamp, to the three worlds — *bhū*, *bhavaḥ* and *svaḥ*. May the Sun god do good to us, who is the ornament of the sky, the cause of the three *kālas*, full of Vedas and the way to obtain the *trivargas*[126] (three objects of worldly existence) – *dharma, artha* and *kāma*. I adore the Gāyatrī Devī who is venerable in the three worlds and who is saluted three times even by *Trilocana* (Śiva) himself".[127]

Describing the advent of Sūrya along with the causes of his worship in his work, Halāyudha says, "Savitā is coming. What is the form of the Savitā? Possessing qualities of *sṛṣṭi* etc. How is he coming? By a chariot. What sort of chariot? Made of gold. While coming what is he doing? Observing the people in the world. Witnessing all the actions of men who do lots of virtues and vices — visible and invisible — in the workplace of the world. Engaging the deities and the mortals in their affairs. Being engaged in their work at Sunrise, people gratify the gods and in return, the latter give rain. Coming everyday to this land, the god Savitā repeatedly helps in this cooperation between man and deity. Coming with whom? Along with the night. What sort of night? With black or gloomy night."[128.] As virtuous acts are not performed at night, hence the nighttime has been called black or full of gloom. This means: the god Savitā who is the impeller of the actions of gods and men and who everyday appears witnessing the virtuous and sinful acts of mortals located in the workplace of the world, I worship him.

According to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*,[129] the Sun worshippers gain recovery from different kinds of illness. In this regard, it has been said in this text: "Brahmā said: after taking a bath at the three periods of the day (*i.e.* dawn, noon and Sunset), if you adore the Sun devotedly along with *mantra*, you will be cured from ailments. If you devotedly worship the Sun god for one year with all the sixteen items of the ritual[130] by muttering the hymn – '*Om hṛṅga namobhagavate sūryāya paramātmane svāhā*', you are sure to get rid of disease. I am giving you this wonderful armour[131] of the Sun. Out of fear, ailment never comes close to the possessor of this armour as the snakes fearfully run away at the sight of *Garuḍa*. Disclose this *kavaca* only to your own disciple who is of a pure heart and of an intense devotion to his preceptor. In the event of offering this *kavaca* to other's disciple of a wicked nature, the giver will have to court a sure death. The seer of this *kavaca* named *Jagadvilakṣmaṇa* is Prajāpati, its metre is Gāyatrī and the Sun himself is the god. It is made use of for removal of all types of ailments and for attainment of beauty. As soon as one is endowed with this *kavaca*, he attains holiness. It is the embodiment of every essence and the destroyer of all kinds of sin-He who suffers a severe leprosy, whose flesh peels off, who is an eyeless *mahābranī*, who is attacked with tuberculosis, acute pain and many a disease, will undoubtedly be cured from his ailment and enjoy the virtue of bath-taking at all the places of pilgrimage, in case he listens to this hymn for one month, eating *haviṣānna* (boiled sunned rice and *ghee*).[132]

In this connection, the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*[133] says, "He who worships the Sun would be healthy, wealthy and prosperous and repair to the holy immortal feet. He who worships the Sun repeatedly with utmost devotion and eat only at night, will go to the heaven." The same Purāṇa provides us with some important information about the priests who played an important role in the spread of Sun cult in India. It is mentioned here that the Devala Brāhmaṇas who immigrated to India from Śākadvīpa has been known as the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas and the descendants of some Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇa father and Vaiśya mother are called the *Grahavipras* or *Gaṇakas*.[134] These *Grahavipras* officiated in the religious ceremonies. A reference to these Brāhmaṇas is also found in a verse in the *Āryasaptaśatī* where the *grahaśānti* (propitiation of planets by sacrifices etc.) has been beautifully described in connection with a deep attachment of a lady-love for her lover.[135] Besides, the *gaṇaka* (astrologer) class was very skilled in astrology and used to tell one's fortune by drawing lines on the ground with a piece of chalk. However, they were very much ill famed in the society for their hypocritical nature — so much so that they have even found a mention in a verse in the *Āryasaptaśatī* while describing the deceitfulness of the lover towards his lady-love.[135] Naturally, these astrologers who are even called *kaitavavid*[137] (master fraud) were not at all an object of honour everywhere in the society and usually looked upon as *patita* (fallen, degraded or outcast) because they had given up the Vedic religion and got excessively attached to astrology. A branch of this class who were known as *Agradānī Brāhmaṇa* were also regarded as *patita* because they used to receive first gift of the funeral ceremony from the *Śūdras*.

Worship through Images

In addition to the epigraphic evidences, a large number of the images of the Sun god have been found in Bengal during the eighth to the twelfth century A.D., indicating the great popularity of Sun cult and consequently the growth and development of Sun images.

Three images of the solar divinity are known to belong to the eighth century A.D., all-datable in its second half. Based on their find spots, it is presumed that the worship of the god in image form was prevalent in *Varendrī* and some parts of *Uttar Rāḍha*. Continuation of earlier fashion and appropriation of newer trends are clearly noticeable in their iconography. The terracotta Sūrya[138] from Pāhārpur represents the god with a halo, seated as cross-legged and holding full-blown lotuses into uplifted hands, which reminds us of the god on the Bodh Gayā railings. The relief from Bhadrakālī (Hooghly)[139] with a clear sign of emphasis on flatness not only echoes the two-dimensional art of Bhārhut but also depicts the deity (Pl. 10a) in full anthropomorphic form ignoring the prescribed rule of the *Matsya Purāṇa*. Another feature in this sculpture not very uncommon in Pāla sculptures is the representation of the deity inside a shrine with minor niches within itself shaped as *caitya*. The appearance of the *caitya* windows in solar iconography is quite natural in view of the fact that the Pāla kings were ardent patrons of Buddhism. The temple design in the sun-icon indicates the popularity of temple-concept in the worship of the Sun god. Sūrya and his two attendants Daṇḍī and Piṅgala are represented as wearing a pair of pointed boots, as it would be seen in the sun-icons belonging to the Pāla Bengal. The chariot and horses along with the charioteer vanish from the scene. The god holds a lotus in each hand, the petals of which facing the viewer are open while those of the upraised flower are closed. This style of Sūrya image does not tally with that of the earlier images of the Gupta period when sometimes the divinity held three flowers instead of two in each hand. Another interesting sun image of the eighth century A.D. image in grey sandstone comes from Naogāon, Rajshāhi.[140] Occurrence of only three Sun images in the three districts of early Bengal along with the possibility of two being used as icon for worship leads us to presume that the anthropomorphic worship of the god had yet not developed on an organized and wide-spread scale because of the strong Brāhmaṇical concept of the Sun worship as visualized in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* discussed earlier and comparative weakness of the champions of the solar icons. The absence of the female attendants in the Sun images also speaks of its distance from Tāntrika philosophy.

A greater popularity of the icon-worship of the Sun is probably witnessed in the subsequent ages because of a wider belief in his curative aspect as well as a stable government and liberal religious policy under the Pālas. However, out of the 26 ninth century AD. images noticed hitherto, all the 25 of known provenance hail from Puṇḍravardhana – four[141] from Rajshāhi, one from Bogra,[142] three from Dinajpur[143] and 16 from Malda.[144] Therefore, it is quite reasonable to think that image worship of the solar deity became more popular not only in the district of Rajshāhi but also extended to new areas like the districts of Dinajpur and Māldā, the last showing comparatively a tremendous vogue of images in the Sun-cult. Wonderful growth of Sun images in comparision to the previous century and greater extension of their find spots might have been due to the spread of the icon-worshippers in different areas and increased belief in the *rogaharttā* concept of the Sun god. The tradition of Sun worship as noticed among the Puṇḍras in the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* of the fourth entury B.C. probably played a prominent role in the ever-increasing popularity of the anthropomorphic worship of the god in the Puṇḍravardhana. Anyway, it is interesting to note that out of 16 Sun images from Malda, eleven came from Gāzole and the rest from Bamangola and Habibpur and all these areas are very close to the district of Dinajpur. With these facts in our hand, we are inclined to presume that a large area in Puṇḍravardhana comprising Rajshāhi, Dinajpur and Māldā was emerging as a dominating zone of Sun cult, its centre being located in the first-named district. It may also be mentioned in this connection that in three of the Gāzole images[145] previously mentioned, neither the Sun god nor his attendants wear any boots – a feature which is extremely rare not only in Bengal but also in the whole of India excepting the South. Generally, Sun images in north and east India are found with booted legs as an essential component of the *udīcyaveśa* or the deity's feet are left uncarved in accordance with the injunction of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, which prescribes deterrent punishment for such violation. Even the attendant gods and goddesses are similarly represented. Perceptibly, the artists must have followed some iconographic text of South India for those three bootless images. May be, some time in the ninth century A.D. there developed a settlement of the Sun-worshipping people in the Gāzole area where some followers of the Southern tradition of the solar cult preferred to inhabit because of like-mindedness in cult-affiliation. Non-availability of Sun-idols from Rāḍha, Vaṅga or Samatata may be attributed to the pre-dominance of orthodox Hinduism in those regions.

During the Buddhist Pāla rule in Bengal, the people at large remained within the fold of Brāhmaṇical religions. It appears that Pāla art and culture flourished not only on the patronage of the court but also of the active interest of the rich individuals and exigencies of religious cults.[146] Regarding the execution of a piece of sculpture, the person or persons under whose patronage it was being executed, had nothing to suggest. It was the artists who from time to time within the principles of image making became successful, as suggested by Bhattacharyya[147] in converting an image into a perfect piece of art. This is equally true in cases of some of the excellent pieces of sun icons. It is, however, difficult to say whether the sun priests simply enjoined to adhere to the texts strictly or allowed the sculptors to have the liberty while making the images. There is, however, little doubt that for the artistic exuberances including the execution of the sun images during the Pāla-Sena periods, there was any place for the people at large. 'That was basically the art of the higher classes of the influential groups of the contemporary socio-economic order.' We have little evidences of the art of the common people during these centuries in respect of Sūrya icons until in later centuries when the Sun worship was relegated to the status of folk-religion.

High boots prevail in most of the images of the Sun god as well as his attendants though they are mostly clothed in *dhoti*. A transparent *uttarīya* with fluttering ends sometimes adorns the central deity by passing over his arms. Sūrya is endowed with a *kirīṭa* (diadem) which is flat at the top and frequently armed with a sword by his left side – a warrior feature that first made its appearance in the Kashipur sculpture.[148] The god is frequently attended by Piṅgala and Daṇḍī only. Pot-bellied Piṅgala usually carries a pen in his right hand and an inkpot in the left while the *āyudhas* and the posture of Daṇḍī's hand often vary. The left hand of Daṇḍī is sometimes represented as endowed with *śūla* or resting on a staff or placed on the hip while the right hand is raised to exhibit the *abhaya-mudrā*. However, in almost all cases, both these attendants of the Sun god are adorned with *Karaṇḍa-mukuṭas*.[149] Mahāśvetā (Pṛthvī) makes a frequent appearance in front of Sūrya, exhibiting *abhaya* with her right hand and holding *akṣamālā* (rosary) and *kamaṇḍalu* (water-pot) in the left or holding *akṣamālā* in the right hand and *kamaṇḍalu* in the left one. Two consorts of the Sun god, Saṁjñā (Sarenu or Rajñī) and Chāyā (Nikṣubhā) enter the iconographic scene, though in a very few images. They are represented as carrying lilies and flywhisks or showing *abhaya-mudrā* with their right hands and placing the left on the hip. ūṣā and Pratyūṣā in archer pose are also seldom represented. Aruṇa usually seated at the base or in the middle is shown with reins of the horses in his left hand and whip in the right. Sūrya's ornaments consist of necklace, bangles, earrings and a jeweled girdle. He is found in a pearl *upavīta* in the images from Tanor, Rajshāhi and Shanail, Bogra (Pl. 7a). The Bogra image of the god also depicts him with a circular *tilaka* on the forehead. Twisted rolls of hair fall on shoulders and over forehead in the images of Tanor, Rajshāhi and Shanail. In a few images, horses are depicted as galloping to right and left in groups of three with the seventh horse in the middle against a wheel whose spokes are shaped like lotus. Piṅgala and Daṇḍī are nimbate in the images of Tanor and of an unknown place, both in the district of Rajshāhi. In an image from Rajshāhi, there is an oval *prabhāvalī* behind the head with a beaded border. In another image from Rajshāhi (Pl. 17a), two kneeling worshippers are depicted with seven horses between them while in the image from Thakurgaon (Dinajpur) there is a kneeling figure of a worshipper at the base. In an image from Ramchandrapur (Biral, Dinajpur) *Kīrtimukha* appears at the apex leading us to the conclusion that the image seems to have been made towards the end of the nineth century. The back slab in invariably rounded at the top and plain except for occasional depiction of a foliated border and a lotus at the apex with flying *vidyādhara* on either side. Anyway, increased presence of female attendance shows some sort of readiness of the icon-worshippers to accept the Tāntric philosophy to some extent. Growth of their sectarian devotion or *bhakti* to Sūrya might have contributed to comparative development of the Sun's personality in many a respect. Anthropomorphic concept of the god was heading for greater Indianisation despite some ongoing alien traits, as is evidenced from the depiction of dress, ornaments *tilaka* and *prabhāvalī* and treatment of horses. The element of *bhakti* for the god is traceable in the desire of the donors to have their sculptures carved at the pedestal.

Tenth Century A.D.

Out of the sixteen images of the Sun god identified as belonging to the tenth century A.D., all but two have again come from Puṇḍravardhana and their distribution against individual district is as follows: Rajshāhi[150] – 3, Bogra[151] – 1, Rangpur[152] – 1 Dinajpur[153] – 2, Malda [154] – 4, Faridpur[155]-1, Bankura[156] – 1, Hooghly[157] – 1, and 2 in VRM[158] most probably from Rajshāhi or some adjoining area. Puṇḍravardhana in this century also maintained its position as the centre of Sun worship. Though image making for the Sun god appears to have come down, its worship witnessed further extension in new areas such as Rangpur in north Bengal, Faridpur in Vaṅga and Bankura in Rāḍha. It seems that some of the Sun worshipping people inhabiting probably in Rajshāhi district were shifting to other places because of professional or commercial necessity or/and the curative aspect of the Sun god was gaining ground in the psyche of the people of new areas impelling them to worship the Sun deity in image form. In iconographic horizon, a few new trends became very popular in the subsequent times. The back slab, though still largely rounded at the top, turned into a pointed one in a few cases and this trend seems to have begun from the Rajshāhi or neighbouring areas. Depiction of garland-bearing Vidyādharas on either side below the lotus at the apex is still not very common. *Prabhāvalī* has also started finding a place behind the head of the god, though on a very small scale. Pedestal of *saptaratha* type seems to be much more popular than the other forms. Sūrya's standing in *samapādasthānaka* on a *padmapīṭha* is not very uncommon now. The only Sūrya image in Bengal standing in *tribhaṅga* is a product of this century. Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, Aruṇa and Mahāśvetā are seen accompanying the Sun god in most of his representations. The arrow-shooting Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā also appear in company of the god in a number of icons while the god's consorts Saṁjñā and Chāyā are very seldom represented. High boots, sometimes ornamented, and *dhoti* in the body of Sūrya as well as his attendants go on being employed as before. *Upavīta* and *uttarīya* very often adorn the god. There might be sometime a jeweled *kaṭibandha* encircling the waist of the god, from which dangles a sword at his left. Necklace, circular earrings or *patrakuṇḍalas* in his elongated ears and a high *kirīṭa* with a flat top continue to beautify the divinity in addition to twisted locks of hair falling over the forehead and on shoulders. The representation of the seven horses on the pedestal with the fourth one from the left placed within a wheel and others galloping away to right and left in groups of three is an established practice now. The fashion of the throne back comes into the scene via an image from Godagari, Rajshāhi.[159]

Eleventh Century A.D.

That Sun worship gained much more popularity in this region in the eleventh century A.D. than in the previous one is evidently clear from the discovery of more number of images. Out of forty-one[160] images with known date (eleventh century A.D.) and provenance, 15 hail from Rajshāhi[161] or neighbouring areas, 2 from Bogra, 1 from Pabna, 6 from Dinajpur, 6 from Malda (Habibpur — 2), 1 from Jalpaiguri, 1 from Coochbehar, 4 from Dacca (Vikrampur – 3) and 1 from Comilla. However, from literary texts and other sources, we have come to know about several Sūrya images of unidentified dates and meager details from districts and regions such as Rajshāhi (8), Dinajpur (37), Malda (4), Bogra (5), Jalpaiguri (1), Coochbehar (1), Dacca (17), Faridpur (2), Comilla (6), Noakhali (1), Murshidabad (1), Birbhum (8), Burdwan (3), Bankura (2), Purulia (1), Hooghly (5), 24 Parganas (4), Midnapore (2), Barisal (1), East Bengal (11), north Bengal 12 and Bengal (14). They might have belonged to last two or three centuries of the early Bengal and are a clear indication of increasing popularity or extent of Sun worship in ancient times in this part of India. Anyway, it may be safely presumed that in eleventh century A.D., Rajshāhi maintained its position as the principal centre of Sun worship followed by Dinajpur and Malda and at least some new areas came under the sphere of the solar cult. Presumably, Vikrampur was an important centre of Sun worship in the Vaṅga region.

We may now look into the solar iconography of this century (Pl. 18a). During the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. the decorative impulse and other details in respect of costume and attitude almost recall the Viṣṇu icons of the same age all over northern India in spite of some regional traits.[162] In this later Pāla age, we come into acquaintance with various anthropomorphic and theriomorphic impressions as accessory to the main divinity. The back slab is invariably pointed at the top except for infrequent cases. At the apex is mostly the *Kīrtimukha*, spewing out floral scrolls through the corners of its lion-mouth. The top may seldom be decorated with a lotus, a floral sign or an umbrella as well. Below it on either side is seen a flying *gandharva*, sometimes along with consort, each carrying a garland with folded hands. Very frequently is found the *makara*-headed throne back supported by two pilasters with *kinnara* musicians to right and left. The decorations of back slab may also consist of *gaja-siṁha* motif on either side. Sometimes we notice the figures of kneeling devotees at the extreme right and left or some portion of the base. The pedestal is mostly of *Saptaratha* or *Navaratha* type. Sūrya is frequently represented as standing in the usual pose on a lotus, which in the Koṭālīpārā[163] or Bhitargarh image[164] issue from the *agni-kuṇḍa* (sacrificial fire-pit). The representation of *agni-kuṇḍa* in a Sun-icon may be an indication of growing importance of sacrificial ceremony in the religious sphere. Subsidiary figures except Aruṇa and Mahāśvetā may also have individual footrest.

The figure of Sūrya is usually carved partly in the round. The god goes on as represented in *samabhaṅgasthānaka* on a *padmāsana*, holding in each hand, a full-blown lotus by the stalk. He is accompanied by Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Aruṇa, Mahāśvetā, Saṁjñā, Chāyā, Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. This indicates the full development of the god's iconographic traits as well as the journey of standardization. Aruṇa is frequently seated on the head of a *makara* with legs hanging down on two sides of the animal whose snout is held in his left hand and carrying in his right hand a whip raised high. A swan or a peacock may unusually replace the *makara*. Sometimes ūṣā and Pratyūṣā may not be represented at all or if depicted, may not be in the archer pose. Piṅgala who invariably stands to the right of the god is found to his left in an exceptional case.[165] On the left stands Daṇḍī, exhibiting the *abhaya* or holding a broken sword in his right hand and the left hand placed on the hip or on a staff or holding a staff or *śūla* or a sword. Sūrya is in *udīcyaveśa*, his torso very frequently being clad in short tunic and sometimes bare except for scarf and *upavīta*. The god and his attendants are all clad in *dhoti* and wear high boots.

Behind the head of the god, there is an oval or semi-oval and sometimes ornamental *prabhāvalī* with two borders, one plain and the other decorated with flower petals. In this period, we make our real acquaintance with idealized carvings of the *prabhāvalī* or nimbus behind the main deity. The celestial fire behind the main deity is arranged in the rare flamboyance of foliated patterns. The waist is generally encircled by a jeweled *kaṭibandha*. All wear a profusion of ornaments on the neck, ears, arms and wrists. In two sculptures,[166] the Sun god is seen as wearing *vanamālā*, which is characteristic of Viṣṇu. This marks the beginning of Sūrya's assimilation with Viṣṇu. In a few Sun icons, eight planets are also engraved, which, no doubt, emphasizes the planetary aspect of the god and thus unconsciously starts the process of reducing the great Sun god to the status of a mere *graha* to be worshipped during *grahayajña*. The *yajñopavīta*, which is usually worn by the god, is replaced by a cord tied in the middle of the chest into knots like a *channavīra*, which is characteristic of Kṛṣṇa. Sūrya wears an *uttarīya* as usual. The head of the god is adorned by a tall *kirīṭa-mukuṭa* topped by an *āmalaka* (Pl. 17b). Headgears of Daṇḍī and Piṅgala consist of *karaṇḍa-mukuṭas* in the Deopara (Rajshāhi) Solar relief.[167] However rare, a row of ringlets is still visible on the forehead below the crown and a pair of twisted rolls of hair falls on both the shoulders. The representation of seven horses with one placed in the centre within the *ekacakra* of the Sun's chariot and the rest placed in the group of three galloping away to right and left came to be an established pattern by this time. In the Sun icon from Joypurhat (Bogra),[168] the god stands within a temple suggested by a three-lobed arch resting on a pair of pillars but the arch is not crowned by *āmalaka* (Pl. 15b).

Sūrya is armed, as before, with a sword that hangs by his left side from a baldric, which passes over the thighs right to left. In addition to the sword, the god also sometimes keeps a dagger in his waistband. A bejeweled dagger on each side may also be seen. The frequent endowing of sword or dagger to the Sun god jointly or in greater number is quite compatible with the prevailing political situation of early Bengal, which may be briefed here. In 1019 A.D., Kalachuri Gāṅgeya occupied Tīrabhukti, which was recaptured by Mahīpāla I in 1024 A.D. The same year, South Bengal had to face an invasion by the Coḷas. The incursion that was inflicted upon Bengal by Kalachuri Karṇa was paid back with a strong resistance in 1041 A.D. and ultimately there brought about a treaty between the two at the intermediacy of Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna Atīśa. Again, in 1043 A.D., a Pāla king, this time Vigrahapāla, is seen having entered into a conflict with Kalachuri Karṇa. In 1055 A.D., Jātavarman put an end to the rule of the Candra dynasty to introduce their royal line in Vikramapur. Five years later, started the feudatory rule of Sāmantasena in Rādhājanapada. In 1071 A.D., the Pāla king Mahīpāla II lost his life in the people's revolt, which ultimately led to the founding of *Kaivarta-rājya in* Varendra under Divyok. The year 1100 A.D. witnessed the defeat and killing of Kaivarta king Bhīma and restoration of Varendra by the Pāla king Rāmapāla. In the light of the above facts, it may safely be said that for almost the whole of the eleventh century A.D. there prevailed a warlike situation in Bengal leading to a good deal of political ups and down and under the prevailing condition, the necessity of more and more weapons must have left a tremendous impact in the psychology of the people. This might have largely impelled the people to conceive the Sun god already in *udīcyaveśa* more as the representation of a militarily well-equipped ruler and probably to raise him to the status of an Emperor, he was provided with *makara*-headed throne supported by ornamented pillars and *kinnara* musicians for his royal entertainment.

It is deserving of note that Sun images from Vaṅga usually bear eleven Ādityas engraved on them. This is, no doubt, a conscious attempt to depict and worship of Sūrya as one of the Ādityas, however important he may be, and not forgetting his other eleven counterparts. This indicates the unquestionable acceptability of one god Sūrya being put into question and distinetly foreshadows his decline when emphasis would be laid upon the *'ekāntika'* worship of the *'Iṣṭadeva'* due to the advent of monotheistic ideas from the South.

Twelfth Century A.D.

Thirty-five images[169] are found to have definitely been the products of the twelfth century A.D. and their distribution[170] against the find-spots is as follows: Rajshāhi: 12[171]; Rajshāhi or adjoining area 8; Bogra: 1; Dinajpur: 1; Māldā: 5[172]; Jalpaiguri: 1, Coochbehar: 2 and Dacca: 5. However, many of the images referred to in different sources without any date must have also belonged to this era of early Bengal. Rajshāhi again emerged as an important centre of Sun cult in Bengal and region wise, the cult is found to have been more popular in Puṇḍravardhana than in its other three counterparts namely Rāḍha, Vaṅga and Samataṭa. Sun worship in Vaṅga mainly revolved round Dacca and its adjoining area. The solar cult was, of course, not that unpopular in the *Rāḍha-janapada* but here the Sun god was quickly being assimilated into the concept of *Dharmaṭhākura* who was one of the most popular folk-deities in this region, originally possessing some of the solar attributes.

The iconographic elements of the Sun deity are not that different from those of the previous century (Pl. 17b). The back slab, which is invariably pointed at the top, is largely richly decorated. There is the *Kīrttimukha* sign at the top except for very exceptional depiction of lotus etc. Below on each side is a garland carrying flying Vidyādhara, sometimes accompanied by his consort. Very often, we come across the throne back with *makara* device having two pilasters on which *kinnara* musicians or geese seldom appear on either side. The centaur-upon-elephant design (*gaja-siṁha*) is frequently exhibited on the two perpendicular sides of the piece. The rampant lion has between his jaws what appears to be the stalk of a lotus. Sometimes the god and some of his attendants may be found as standing within the alcove of a temple suggested by a trefolio arch, supported by a pair of richly carved pillars and topped by *āmalaka* (Pl. 18b). The pedestal is of mostly *Saptaratha* type, though the *Navaratha* form is not that uncommon. Male and female worshipper or donor couple (Pl. 17b) may also occur on either side of the pedestal. Even the name of donor or the artisan may be found as engraved.

The deity stands in *samabhaṅga* pose as usual on a *padmāsana*. He is always accompanied by his attendants: Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, Charioteer Aruṇa and miniature Mahāśvetā, two consorts Saṁjñā and Chāyā and arrow-shooting ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. The *prabhāvalī* behind Sūrya's head is usually semi-oval or oval and has double borders, one plain and the other decorated with flower petals. A mass of flames (Pl. 19b) behind the back of Sūrya frequently rises as high as the top of his crown. Aruṇa is usually sitting on the head of a *makara*, clutching the proboscis of the animal with his left hand.

The god keeps wearing a *kirīṭamukuṭa* topped by an *āmalaka*. However, the god is once seen adorned with *karaṇḍa-mukuṭa*[173] that is indicative of subordination in status. The deviation from *kirīṭamukuṭa*, which is textually exclusive for Nārāyaṇa, to

Karaṇḍa-mukuṭa, however singular a case it may be, is probably an indication of a question about the relative status of the Sun god in a society predominantly under the impact of Vaiṣṇavism, which really eclipsed the Sun cult some decades after. Piṅgala is sometimes seen as wearing *Jaṭāmukuṭa*,[174] which is prescribed for Brahmā and Rudra. This could be viewed as an endeavor to take Piṅgala who is identifiable with Agni, out of the secondary rank in a Sun icon by raising him to the status of Brahmā and Rudra. It may also be seen as an effort on part of one of the principal attendants of Sūrya to curve a separate position for himself. In some cases, Daṇḍī is also endowed with *Karaṇḍa-mukuṭa* in place of *Kirīṭa*. The change towards inferior type of headgear for the Sun god or his attendant or allotment of *Jaṭāmukuṭa* for Piṅgala, in all probability, points to the downward course of the solar cult.

In the Sun-relief from Badhair (Tanor, Rajshāhi),[175] there appears on the forehead of the god a lozenge-shaped *tilaka*, which is characteristic of Buddha signifying 'nobility'. The employment in a solar image of some symbol marked down for the deities of other sects undoubtedly aims at establishing the borrower as having the same position as that of the other dominant cult-gods. The *trivalī* mark, which is characteristic of Viṣṇu, is found incised on the throat of the god in the icons from Rajshāhi,[176] which again strengthens our supposition about the ongoing process of permanent 'solar eclipse' by Viṣṇu. Ringlets of hair, though seldom, continue to appear on the forehead under the rim of the crown and on either shoulder.

The god and all his companions are invariably in *udīcyaveśa*, though *dhoti* or *śārī* covers their lower body. Unlike some past time when there was a strong tendency to keep the upper body of the deity bare along the indigenous line, the torso of the god is now mostly covered by a tunic or armour, the outlines of which intertwine to form a knot on the breast. Some weapon in possession of the divinity has come to be almost an established feature by this time. As before, he is generally girt with a sword, which hangs along his left side and it is not infrequently that a dagger is also thrust into the waistband on the right. Warlike situation and resultant defensive mentality perhaps largely contributed to the greater use of tunic or armour in the torso instead of keeping it bare as well as the usual possession of offensive weapons.

In the Sūrya figures of the Pāla and Sena periods, the religious outlook of the northern and Irānian regions is retained, but in the meditation and interpretation of the solar divinity, it would seem that the Vedic and Brāhmaṇical religious concepts had merged.[177] Concerning the iconographic features of the Sun god in the early and late Pāla period, the opinion of J.N. Banerjea may be mentioned here. The treatment of the broad sword hanging on the left side of the central deity, the parabolic '*prabhāvalī* ', the '*kulaḥ*' caps on the heads of Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, absence of any elaborate decoration, the separate '*prabhā*' (halo) and the absence of the two queens all these features may indicate a Sun-icon as belonging to the early or middle Pāla period.[178] The profuse ornamentation of the relief, the pointed stela with the '*Kīrttimukha*' design on the top centre (absent in the earlier group), the arrangement in several parallel layers of the companions (shown in different sizes) of the main deity, the Indianised crowns (*'karanda-mukuṭas'*) of Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, definitely date a Sun relief in the late or early Sena period.[179] These are characteristic of the fully developed type of solar icons in Bengal. The practice of occassionally recording the name of the donor, sometimes along with those of his father and grandfather, or the name of the sculptor along with even that of his preceptor, somewhere on the pedestal, starts from the ninth century A.D. and continues throughout the succeeding ages of early Bengal.

Syncretic outlook in Saura Cult

With the fuller development of *bhakti* element in religious thought, there came up different independent sects around different deities. As time passed, there was a fusion of different, often rival cults resulting in a composite image. Either this was because of a craving for the ideological compromise among the rival philosophy of different sects, promotion of good will and religious tolerance or different cults simply merged with one another, as different members of the same family worshipped different deities. Besides, approved *Smṛti* works like some of the *Dharmaśāstras* and the *Manu-* and *Yājñavalkya- smṛtis* did not advocate the cause of any cult in particular. Therefore, among many a follower of the authoritative *Smṛti* works, was developed a liberal attitude towards matters of religious faith. Many of the persons of higher order, usually Brāhmaṇas known as *Smārtas*, evolved a kind of worship described as *Pañcāyatana-pūjā*, in which the principal deities of the five approved Brāhmaṇical Hindu cults were the objects of veneration. *Pañcāyatana-pūjā* stands for the worship of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā (Pārvatī), Sūrya and Gaṇeśa. They are worshipped in their lithomorphic forms, which are: for Viṣṇu the *śālagrāma*-stone, for Śiva the *liṅga-* (*bāṇaliṅga*), for Durgā (Pārvatī) *svarṇarekhā-*, for Sūrya the *sūryakānta-* and for Gaṇeśa the *svarṇabhadra*-stone. Before those, sacred *mantras* are murmered and incense, rice-grains and flowers are offered to them. During the Sena-Varman rule in Bengal when Brāhmaṇical religion was greatly governed by the *Smṛti*, *Pañcopāsanā* became very popular. Lakṣmaṇasena, Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena were all staunch Vaiṣṇavas but they were equally respectful to Sadāśiva. Indeed, Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena were also devotees of Sūrya. In all his endeavors, Jayadeva was publicly known as a devout Vaiṣṇava, but in fact, he was a *Smṛti*-versed Brāhmaṇa votary of the *Pañcadevatā*. He not only created panegyric for *Rādhāmādhava*, but also composed hymns of praise for Mahādeva as well as verses on the yogic means of salvation.[180] Most probably, the poet Dhoyī was also a votary of *Pañcopāsanā* like Jayadeva.[181] Most of the Sena kings were also followers of *Pañcopāsanā*, as is evidenced by simultaneous show of reverence to Nārāyaṇa, Maheśa and Sūrya in a few of their inscriptions as well as reference in the *Pavana-dūta* (verse 28) to installation of both the *Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa* and Mahādeva images in temples in Suhmadeśa.[182] The poet Vidyāpati was not at all the great Vaiṣṇava, nor a votary of Sahajiyā, but that he was a *Smṛti*-versed Brāhmaṇa devotee of the *Pañcadevatā* as well as a worshipper of Śiva, *Gaṅgā* and *Umā*.[183] It is clear from the above that during the last centuries of the Hindu rule in early Bengal, Sūrya received worship as a constituent cult-deity of *Pañcopāsanā* from a large number of followers of this religious system.

The trend of rapprochement between different sects is best illustrated by the syncretic images. Features of the Sun god are traceable in the images of various cult deities. The resplendent body of the Sun had to be trimmed by his father-in-law Viśvakarmā to enable his daughter Saṁjñā, the principal consort of Sūrya, to bear her husband's company, and this, perhaps, resulted in the development of many weapons, attributes, etc. of other Brāhmaṇical Hindu deities. The *Gāyatrī mantra* itself is conceived by orthodox Brāhmaṇas as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, in the morning, midday and evening respectively, each of which deity shines resplendent within the flaming solar orb. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Sūrya is invoked thus: "Brahmā's, Śiva's and Viṣṇu's bodies are the same as the body of the resplendent Sun whose real nature is threefold indeed, may he be gracious!" Another invocation runs thus: "Adoration to Sūrya, who is the base of meditation, and who is one with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva."[184] It must be hymns such as the above, which were the basis of the development of composite figures in later periods.

The close connection of Sūrya with Viṣṇu, or Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa is well known. A black chlorite specimen[185] depicts the Sun god in *padmāsana* endowed with four hands. In front of the bare-footed god are seated Mahāśvetā and Aruṇa driving a seven-horsed chariot. While in his upper hands, the god carries a pair of lotuses, the lower right and left hands hold the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* respectively. The example appears to be a syncretic icon combining the elements of Sūrya with those of Viṣṇu. The composite icons with the features of Sūrya and Śiva are comparatively few. One such can be recognized in a twelfth century A.D. image found at Manda (Rajshāhi), in which Sūrya and Śiva are the constituents and which has been tentatively identified as *'Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava'* by K.C. Sarkar.[186] The compromising spirit between the sects of Sūrya and Brahmā[187] is revealed by the Ms. *Puṣkara-Māhātmya* of the *Padma Purāṇa.* An eleventh century A.D. sculpture[188] from Mahendra (Kushmandi, West Dinajpur) depicting the composite figure of Sūrya with Brahmā is available in the Varendra Research Museum. The deity in this case has six arms. In two of its hands, two lotuses are held, while the others display *varadamudrā, akṣamālā, abhayamudrā* and *kamaṇḍalu.* The increased number of hands, its solar features, the rosary and water-vessel – the well-known emblems of Brahmā in two of its hands, make it a composite icon.

Apart from Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, reconciliation and rapprochement between rival gods and their creeds is also traceable from the direct association of *Bodhisattva Lokeśvara* with Hindu cult divinities including the Sun god. A fragmentary relief[189] of medieval Bengal depicts a 10-armed Sūrya-Lokeśvara now preserved in the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta University. Of the extant four hands, a pair of right and left hands holds two full-blown lotuses. The other pair holds the *akṣamālā* and an indistinct object. The god wears *jaṭāmukuṭa* in one head. A seated miniature of the two-armed *Dhyānībuddha Amitābha* appears on the crest of the image. The image has tentatively been identified as a combined representation of Sūrya and Lokeśvara.[190]

Sometimes, separate images of gods belonging to rival sects were grouped together with a view to promote the religious tolerance among different sectaries. The worship of such images in-group was also prevalent in Bengal. An inscribed slab of the 26th year of Dharmapāla is carved with figures of Sūrya, Viṣṇu and Śiva (or *Bhairava*), each sitting side by side.[191] Sūrya at the extreme right is shown holding two lotus-flowers, one in each of his hands and wearing boots on his feet. Viṣṇu, in the extreme left, has four hands holding *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma*. Śiva (or Bhairava)[192] is shown in the middle. It seems that the main god of the worshipper was Śiva to whom the inscription is dedicated.

There are instances of borrowing and incorporating some deities by the Buddhists from the solar cult, which may be taken as the sign of the growing popularity, if not of assertion and encroachment, of the Sun cult upon Buddhism. One of the four most important forms of Buddhist Avalokiteśvara-Lokanātha seen in Bengal is *Siṁhanāda- Lokeśvara*, the healer of Leprosy,[193] who took the form and features of Sūrya. Three-faced, borne by seven boars and a truncated demon as the charioteer, kneeling in an archer's pose in the chariot, the important Vajrayāna goddess Mārīcī is the Buddhist counterpart of the Brāhmaṇical Sūrya.[194] It is interesting to note that while the Buddhists in their desire to prove the superiority of their own gods humbled Brāhmaṇical gods such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaurī, Gaṇeśa, and Indra etc., the Sun god never became the target of their attack. The borrowing of solar concept in creating and fashioning of Lokeśvara and Mārīcī as well as the lack of sectarian animosity reflected through icons shows harmony and amity between the two creeds. The frequent hostile attitude of the Brāhmaṇical champions towards the Buddhists and the unreverential indifference of the former towards the solar priests of foreign origin and non-Vedic practices might have brought these two cults very close to each other. That is why the followers of Buddhism, probably, made the Buddha the brother of Sūrya (*Āditya-Bandhu*), and had no objection to worshipping him also. This might have been the policy also of the adherents of Jainism. Moreover, the Sun-worshippers too might have liked such an alliance, for Buddhism was then the dominant religion of a great part of the country.[195] Appearences of small figures of gods such as Trinity, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, and Kārttikeya etc. on the top of a few solar images remind us of the presence of parental *Dhyānī Buddhas* in the Buddhist icons.

There were enthusiasts in every religion to champion and fight for their own. There was no dearth of mutual hostility between the various sects of Brāhmaṇism. There were rivalry and jealousy between diverse Indian sects. The sectarian animosities found vent through the milder channel of fabrication of mythological stories and construction of interesting images in illustration thereof.

V

Navagraha Worship

Navagrahas (nine planets) came to be worshipped as a component part of the solar religion. They also formed a non-sectarian object of worship. However, they are not mentioned in any inscription of the Gupta period. Presumably, their worship became prevalent in the post-Gupta period and occupied a place of great popularity and importance in medieval time not only among the Hindus but also to a certain extent among the Buddhists. This particular ceremony is known as *Grahayāga* or *Svastyāyana*.

Neither in the Vedic nor in the Epic literature do we find reference to this *Grahayāga*. However, in the *Matsya, Agni* and some other *Purāṇas* as well as in the *Yājñavalkya-Smṛti* there are elaborate rules for the performance of *Grahayāga* to appease the *Navagrahas*. In Chapters 231 and 232 of the *Viṣṇudharmattora* (*Khaṇḍa* 1) there are references to various kinds of actions which bring people under the influence of the *grahas* and encourage them to exert their influence as well as symptoms of persons influenced by different kinds of *grahas* along with treatment of such persons by means of herbs, mantras etc.[196] *Yājñavalkya*[197] says that a man, desirous of peace, prosperity, ample rains (for his crops), long life and nourishment, should perform '*Grahayajñas*', which should also be performed by a man who likes to harm his enemies. *Grahaśānti*[198] or *Grahayajña*[199] was performed before launching on a military campaign. It was also occasioned to pacify evil influence of planets likely to inflict misfortune and danger as well as to avoid inauspicious happenings in religious performances. The planets were worshipped on some other occasions also. Along with the constellations, they were drawn in a circle on the ground and propitiated on the ceremonial ablution called *puṣyasnāna*.[200] In order to make predictions about rainfall and crops, an astrologer went to a place north or east of the city or village and drew on ground planets and constellation and worshipped them.[201]

Navagrahas images were made of different materials. Their figures were also to be drawn on canvas in their respective colour or in *maṇḍalas* made of scented paste (sandal-wood-paste). The *Navagrahas* also found lithic representation. In most cases, the *Navagrahas*, usually standing and rarely seated, were carved in a row, either on a single slab of stone serving as an architectural piece in the medieval temples (*e.g.* in a panel on a doorframe) or on lintels over the entrance doorway and sometimes on the *toraṇa* of a Sūrya temple. According to Manomohan Ganguly,[202] the introduction of these images in the temples was invariably meant to ensure prosperity to their founders and to prevent any evil happening to the temples themselves. They were also carved on sculptures of other deities as subsidiary deities. Perhaps slabs carved with the *Navagrahas* were also used for regular worship.

Besides accompanying the Sun god, the *Navagrahas* are also depicted on the *prabhāvalī* of the *Kalyāṇasundara* or *Śiva-vivāha*[203] and the so-called 'Mother and Child' images. One image of *Śeṣaśayana-Viṣṇu* from Bengal also contains this panel of deities. Separate representations of any particular one of the nine planets are extremely rare.

The earliest reference to the *Grahayajña* in early Bengal is found in connection with Śaśāṅka's disease as mentioned in late genealogical works of Bengal Brāhmaṇas.[204] According to the tradition preserved among a section of the Grahavipra (also called Śākadvīpī) Brāhmaṇas, twelve Brāhmaṇas living on the banks of the Sarayū river were brought by king Śaśāṅka in order to cure himself of a fatal ailment by offering sacrifices to the planets (*grahayajña*). Śaśāṅka was cured and rewarded the Brāhmaṇas who then settled in Bengal. Planets like *Ravi, Candra,* and *Budha* etc. are indirectly referred to in many inscriptions from Bengal. However, specific mention of *Navagraha* worship is found in the Sian (Birbhum) Stone Inscription (approx.1043 A.D.).[205] In verse 55, mention is made of the offering of golden lotus by a king for the icons of the *Navagrahas* (*"cakre yo haimaṁ navagrāmbhojam"*— Verses 54, 55). The gift of golden lotus for the image of the *Navagrahas* takes it for granted that the worship of the nine planets gained immense popularity in the *Uttara Rāḍha* in the first half of the eleventh century A.D. especially among a section of affluent people. It may also be presumed that the donor, like Śaśāṅka, must have been cured of some fatal disease, which inspired him to incur a great expenditure for the worship of the *Navagrahas* out of deep gratitude. It is difficult to identify the king who made the gift of the golden lotus. However, he might have been Nayapāla (1027-43 A.D.) or his son Vigrahapāla III (1043-70). During the Sena-Varman age, one of the major mental focuses was the meditation and concepts entrenched in astrology. There were bathing and eating in respect of lunar days following the injunctions of planets and stars as well as pilgrimages to suit such occasions, oblations, sacrifice and penance. The moon was believed to preside over an eclipse.[206]

The introduction of the *Grahapūjā* everywhere in India is attributed to the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas. With their appearance in this country, the worship of the Sun became widespread and simultaneously the worship of the *Navagrahas* centering round the lord of the planets Sūrya came into vogue. The Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas are known as 'Grahavipra' in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa.* It is surprising that these Brāhmaṇas many of whom were skilled in astrology came to be reproached as Brāhmaṇas of a very low grade under the names of *Bhojaka, Daivajña* and *Agradānī.* On the other hand, they have respectfully been mentioned as *Paṁktipavana* in the *Saṁvatsarasūtra* (2/13) of the *Bṛhat-saṁhitā.* Probably the chauvinism of the indigenous Brāhmaṇas largely contributed to such reprehensible position of the Maga Brāhmaṇas in the society.

The *Navagraha*-panels, discovered so far in Bengal, are dated between the eighth and the twelfth century A.D., which goes to confirm the literary evidence that suggests the late appearance of the ritual known as *grahayāga* in the religious life of the people. The find-spots of the panels are distributed over a wide stretch of territory extending from Dinajpur, Rajshāhi and Malda in north Bengal to the Sundarbans in 24 Parganas district in the southern part of Bengal. Thus, it is evident that all the *graha* images in panels and separate representations are from north and West Bengal and none from the East. Therefore, we can safely say that worship of *Navagraha* images was more popular in north and West Bengal.

Method of Sun Worship in Bengal

Because of scarcity of information in both literary and epigraphic materials, it is very difficult to give an account of the methodology of Sun worship in early Bengal. However, there is no room for doubt that it used to follow largely the Vedic, Epic and Paurāṇic line. Very probably, the Vedic way of Sun worship through the recitation of the hymns and the offerings was prevalent among the orthodox section of the Brāhmaṇas and other higher classes. *Sandhyopāsanā* as a form of Sun worship must have been practiced by the conservative Brāhmaṇas, a large section of whom had come from northern and western part of India. That *Sūrya-namaskāra* was also in vogue is testified by the Gayā Sitalā Temple Inscription.[207] All the four verses on the Sun incorporated in the *Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa* refer to the Sun at sunrise, which shows that it was at the dawn that many Hindus, irrespective of sect, addressed their prayers to the Sun.

The employment of flowers, incense, garlands, lamps etc. in the worship of the Sun that began from the Epic period was also followed in early Bengal as is evidenced by the Jagadishpur copper plate (447 AD.) which refers to donation of lands for a temple of the Sun god and for the expenses to be incurred in connection with the supply of offerings, oblations consisting of rice, milk and sugar (boiled together), as well as for the supply of perfume, incense and oil etc. Image worship of the Sun god at home and in temple was undoubtedly popular. The Vedic *homa* forms an important part of the worship; the *mantras* to be used are either Vedic or Paurāṇic or both.[208]

As mentioned earlier, Sun cult was also influenced by the Tāntric cult, which was becoming quite popular since the seventh-eighth centuries onwards. The method of initiation under Tāntric influence involved the choice and preparation of the ground, selection of spiritual preceptors and disciples, offer of *arghya* to the Sun with the *mahāmantra*, drawing of a *maṇḍala* with the figure of a twelve-petalled lotus in it, performance of *homa* and of *tattvanyāsa* and *mantranyāsa*, worship of the quarter-guardians to whom fish, meat etc. are offered.[209] The *mantras* with Tāntric symbolism are employed at every step. The drawing of *maṇḍala*, the performance of various kinds of *mudrās* and *nyāsas* are in accordance with the Tāntric philosophy. The methods of performing *abhicāra* rites and *bījas* in *mantras* and practice of *yoga* have also been given and six acts *viz. vaśīkaraṇa, ākarṣaṇa, māraṇa, uccāṭana, vidveśana* and *stambhana* etc[210] are also mentioned. The Sun cult appears to have adopted Tāntric practices in the later stage of the later Purāṇas. However, as noticed earlier, Sun worship remained free from the concept of a female principle as the cause of the universe so characteristically developed in the Tāntric philosophy.

The Sun was worshipped at dawn, noon and Sunset. Annual worship and annual car-festival were performed with the use of the Vedic and Paurāṇic *mantras.* Seven different *saptamī tithis* as well as twelve *śukla-saptamīs* were also observed.

Sun sect

The existence of a Sun worship in Bengal may be traced since the fourth century B.C. In the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad,*[211] the non-Āryan Puṇḍras and the Suṁhas who are described as regarding the Sun as the highest reality, were, no doubt, the earliest class of the staunch *Sauras.*

The deep-rooted element of *bhakti,* which is the basis of a sect and which was prevailing vigorously in the country in the pre-Gupta period, is pronouncedly demonstrated in the terracotta Sūrya from Candraketugarh. As parts of the Gupta Empire, Puṇḍravardhana, Rāḍha and Vaṅga certainly came within the main current of the *bhakti*-movement in north India. The Jagadishpur inscription[211] shows that the construction of the Sun-temple and worship by means of the oblations of rice, milk, sugar, perfume, incense, lamp etc. is done by the indigenous people of India – the Vaiśyas. It was the cult of *bhakti* that contributed to the adoption of the temple tradition.[213] The solar shrine in question was the result of a collective effort of three residents – Kṣemārka, Bhoyil and Mahīdāsa. Thus, by the middle of the fifth century A.D. a full-fledged Sun-sect with all the paraphernalia of a temple, image, priesthood, rites and procedures had come into vogue in Bengal.

The development of the Sun's personality in many respects was because of the growth of the sectarian devotion or *bhakti* to Sūrya. The element of *bhakti* for the god is traceable in the desire of the donors to have their images carved on the pedestal. Elaborate rules and regulations for making the Sun images and temples and for other constituents of the solar ritual were actually products of a sectarian Sun cult. The sectarian character of the solar cult is evidenced by the emergence of a special class of priests known as the Magas and the Bhojkas or the Yājakas. The Brāhmaṇas who were known as Ācāryas in Bengal, were the main section of the *Sauras.*[214]

Historical evidence regarding the existence of a separate Sun-sect in medieval Bengal comes from the inscriptions of Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena who call themselves *Paramasaura.*[215] From the beginning of the Gayā Gadādhar Temple Inscription[216] and the Gayā Sitalā Temple Inscription of Yakṣapāla[217] with "*Om namaḥ sūryāya*" and the dedication of the first verse to the Sun god, it appears that the issuers of these two inscriptions were *Paramasaura.* Some epigraphic records on the pedestal of the Sun images suggest that the images of the god were sometimes set up for his worship under the patronage of some leading persons of a locality. Obviously, the images were set up by the *Sauras* and for the *Sauras.* The existence of the *Saura* sect may thus be derived indirectly from the available records. Most of the innumerable images of the Sun god found in Bengal were definitely meant for worship by the *Sauras.*

The concentration of the find-spots of the solar icons in the district of north and east Bengal seems to suggest that the *Sauras* or the devotees of the Sun god mostly settled in those parts of Bengal. Further, the dating of most of the Sun-images from the seventh to the thirteenth century A.D. clearly suggests the increasing number and importance of the *Sauras* during this long span of time. However, the sect of the Sun was not very popular, which emerged under the impact of the indigenous tradition of *bhakti* and the Magian tradition of Sun worship. It seems that at a later period, the *Sauras* assumed a syncretic approach, as is best illustrated by the syncretic images.

Arkakṣetras in Bengal

The existence of a few *Arkakṣetras* may also be traced in ancient Bengal. The '*stotra*' of a Sun god called *Citrāditya*[218] includes the names of all the important images of Sūrya in India. A few of them, which may have been prevalent in Bengal, are *Muṇḍīrasvāmī*, *Mandāra* and *Sāmba* in Varddhamāna. *Muṇḍīra* at the confluence of *Gaṅgā* and *Sāgara* is said to have been one of the three centres of Sun worship of Magian type, other two being situated in *Indravana* in the east[219] *i.e.* Multan and Kālpriyā respectively. The *Gaṅgāsāgara-saṁgama* referred to in the *Skanda Purāṇa*[220] as the place where the morning Sun remained as *Muṇḍirasvāmin* may apparently suggest that the confluence of the river *Bhāgirathī* and the *Sāgara* (Bay of Bengal) was some times recognized as one of the places of Sun worship. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[221] also refers to the greatness of the *Gaṅgāsāgara-saṁgama*. However, from the *Padma Purāṇa*[222] we come to know of the *Gaṅgāsāgara-saṁgama* near *Puruṣottomakṣetra* (modern Puri). *Mandāra* in Puṇyavardhana (Puṇḍravardhana, north Bengal) can not be precisely identified. However, there is a hill called Mandāra-Giri in the Banka sub-division of the district of Bhagalpur, at the foot of which there is a beautiful tank called *Pāpahāriṇī*, where people come to bathe from a long distance on the last day of the month of *Pauṣa*.[223] The fact of taking bath in a tank on *Pauṣa-saṁkrānti* reminds us of the Sun worship and *Sūrya-kuṇḍa*. May be after the name of this Mandāra in Bihar, there might have developed a centre of Sun worship in Puṇḍravardhana. Whatever may be the case, there is no room for any doubt that Puṇḍravardhana was the most important region of Sun worship in Bengal throughout the ancient period, as is evidenced by the reference to the Puṇḍras as the Sun-worshipping tribe in the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* as well as the discovery of large number of Sun images from different parts of this region since the early Gupta age down to the end of the period under review. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think about the existence of *arkakṣetras* in early north Bengal. Varddhamāna is identified as the present Bardhankoṭi in Dinajpur.[224] Large number of Sun images of different types and periods have been discovered from this district. Most probably, the legend of Sāmba's cure by Sun worship contributed to the popularity of the Sun god by the name of *Sāmba* in this area. It is from this district that the Bairhaṭṭā Sūrya image inscription has been found, which has described the god as the remover of all diseases. We have already seen from the Jagadishpur inscription that the temple of the '*Sahasraraśmī* (the Sun) was situated in *Sāmbapura* in *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti*. It appears that based on the healing aspect of Sūrya, the god named Sāmba became highly popular in Vardhamāna, which in course of time developed into an *Arkakṣetra*.

Notes and References

1. A.B. VII.13.18.
2. A.A., II.I.1; Tr. A. B. Keith, Oxford, 1909, 101, 200.
3. B.D.S., I, 1, 2, 13-15.
4. *HBP*, p. 386.
5. Quoted by Belvalkar, S.K. and Ranade, R.D., *History* of *Indian Philosophy*, Poona, 1927, vol. II, p. 298.
6. MacDonnell, A.A. and Keith, A.B., *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, Vol. I, London, p. 536, cf. *KB*, VII.28, *SSS*, XV.26, *BDS*, I.2.14.
7. *HB-I*, p. 20. Puṇḍranagara, the capital city of the Puṇḍras, is proved by epigraphic

evidence to have been situated in the Bogra district of northern Bengal.

8. *SWAI-S,* p. 173.
9. Mukherjee, B.N., *Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī Brāhmī Inscriptions in West Bengal* (India) (Indian Museum Bulletin, vol. XXVI), Calcutta, 1990, p. 51, Sl. No. 21.
10. Basu, S.K., *DIPGV,* p. 22.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 21.
12. *DHI,* pp. 432-433.
13. Basu, *op. cit.,* pp. 74-80.
14. *RV,* I. 164. 46.
15. *Ibid.,*
16. *DHI,* p. 136.
17. Coomaraswami, A.K., *Elements of Buddhist Iconography,* Cambridge, Mass. 1935.
18. *DHI,* p. 138.
19. Deb, Chittaranjan, *Vāṅglār Pallīgīti,* Calcutta, p.181.
20. Mukherjee, B.N., *op. cit.*
21. There are some similar winged figures in the collections of the Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art, Kolkata, which point out their significant relationship with this particular mould from Tamluk. Their Accession Numbers are T6236, T8264 and T8838.
22. Mukherjee, Ranjana, "A winged figure from Tamluk", *Journal of the V.R.M.,* Khanda no. 7, 1981-82, p. 95.
23. Coomaraswami, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art,* Boston, 1927, pl. V. no.16; V.S. Agarwala, *Studies in Indian Art,* Varanasi, 1965, pls. IX, X & XI; Biswas, S.S., *Terracotta Art of Bengal,* Delhi, 1981, p. 79, pl. (a).
24. Coomaraswami, *op. cit.,* pl. XII. no. 41, pl. XVI, no. 55.
25. Parrot, A., *Sumer, The Dawn of Art,* New York, 1961, p. 138, fig. 167A.
26. Grishman, R., *Persia: from the Origins to Alexander the Great,* London, 1964, p. 198, fig. 246.
27. Parrot, A., *op. cit.,* p. 335, fig. 416.
28. Charbonneau, J., Martin, R. & Willard, F., *Classical Greek Art,* London, 1972, p. 23, fig. 21.
29. AMC No. T6838; *Indian Archaeology — A Review,* 1955-56 pl. LXXIIb*; Modern Review,* April, 1956; P.C. Dasgupta, 'Early Terracotta from Candraketugarh', *Lalitkalā* No.6 Oct. 1959, pp. 45-52; Basu, *op. cit.* p. 80.
30. ṚV., X. 88.6.
31. Basu, S.K., *DIPGV,* p. 83.
32. *JISOA,* XVI, pp. 51-56. B. Rowland, however, believes that the figure of the Sun at Bodh-Gayā and Bhājā are represented in 'an allegorical capacity with reference to Buddha's solar character'; see *Art and Architecture of India,* p. 54. In a recent article published in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Mumbai,* 2004 Meena Telim in her paper 'Vedic gods in Buddhist Sculptures' says that the Bhājā Sun 'is a relief of Mitra (Persian) with all his characteristics, which is mistaken as a relief of the Sun god of the Vedic pantheon' (*ibid.,* p. 200). Again, in connection with Bodh-Gayā Sun-image, Telim suggests that this figure is not the Sun god of the Vedic pantheon but 'could be king Ajātaśatru sculptured on the basis of characterization depicted in the Buddhist scriptures' (*ibid,.* p. 204).
33. Basu, *op. cit.,* p. 32.
34. Coomaraswami, *op. cit.,* p. 67, fig. 24.
35. Mukherjee, *op. cit.,* pp. 45-46, Sl. No. 8.
36. Basu, *op. cit.,* p. 90, 94.

37. *DHI*, p. 437.
38. *ṚV.*,1.115, 3-4, 7.60.3, 7.63.2 etc.
39. cf. a second century A.D. seal from Berachampa as noticed by B.N. Mukherjee with the symbol of Sun engraved on it along with an advice to the seafarers. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Sl. 51, pl. XLII. Fig.63.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56, Sl. N0. 39, pl. XXXIII, fig. 37A.
41. Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
42. *RV.*1.115.3-4; 7. 60.3; 7.63.2 etc.
43. *DHI*, p. 431.
44. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p.44, Sl. No. 4, Pl. XVII, Fig.4.
45. It is now in the collection of the Bhuvan Art Gallery and Museum, Calcutta.
46. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 44, Sl. No. 4, Pl. XVII, Fig.4.
47. Saraswati, S.K., *Journal of Department of Letters*, Vol. XXX. 1938, p. 22, fig. 5; *DHI*, p. 435.
48. Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
49. *CBI*, pp. 42- 43.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
51. *EI*, XXXI, p. 57.
52. *Ibid.*, XV, p. 130, 35.
53. *EI*, XX, p. 61.
54. *AGS*, III.7.4-6; *SGS*, II.9.1.
55. *MGS*, I.2.1-2.
56. *CII*, III.28n, 71, 218.
57. "*Gulmagandhike bhagavataḥ sahasrarasmeḥ*
Kārtikadevakule cha bali-charu-satra
Pravarttanāya khanda phutta-pratisaṁskāra-
karaṇāya gandha dhūpatailopayogaya
sasvatkalopabhogyakṣayanivya apratikara
khilakṣetrasaya kulyavapamekat
ktva datum.." verse 13-12 .
Sircar, D.C., *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 61.
58. For Jainism in eastern India, especially in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, see *Some Aspcets of Jainism in Eastern India*, by Dr. P. Jash, New Delhi, 1989.
59. *Bhaviṣya P.*, 139; *Sāmba P.*, 3, 24, 26; *Brahma P.*, 20.
60. *EI*, Vol. II, 1893, p. 338.
61. Indore Copper Plate inscription of Skandagupta records a perpetual endowment (*Abhagnayoga*) given by Devaviṣṇu, a Brāhmaṇa of orthodox Vedic tradition, for the purpose of maintaing a lamp in the temple of the god Sāvitrī, *i.e.* Sun god. According to the condition of the donation, the guild of the oilmen of Indrapura had to supply two 'palas' of oil daily from the interest accruing from money already deposited. CII., Vol.III, London, 1888, p. 70.
62. In this connection it may be pointed out here that the Govindapur inscription[61] (Gayā, Bihar) dated Śaka era 1059 (=1137 A.D.*)* mentions two brothers Manaratha and Daśaratha belonging to the family of Bharadvāja of the Maga Brāhmaṇa origin. Manaratha's son Gaṅgādhara had married a daughter of Jayapāṇi, an official of the king Gauda - *EI*, II, 1893, p. 330.
63. *ESB*, p. 12; *DHI*, p. 435; *HB-I*, pp. 521-22.

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64. *HB-I.* pp. 521-22; *DHI,* p. 435; *ESB. P.,* 12, fig. I.
65. *Matsya P.,* 261.1-4.
66. The terracotta Sūrya from Bogra, which is a remarkable piece of Gupta sculptural art, has no consort or attendant depicted and, as the pedestal is lost, the presence of the horses or the chariot cannot be ascertained. *BSHI,* pp. 188-189, pl. 161.
67. *ESB,* pp. 21-22, fig- 5; *DHI,* pp. 435, 36; *HB-I,* p. 523.
68. *CBI.,* p. 87.
69. *Jayati śrī lokanāthaḥ yaḥ pusaṁ sukṣta–karmaphalahetuḥ satya– tapaḥ-maya-mūrtirloka dvaya-sādhano dharmaḥ//.*
70. *Select Inscriptions,* Vol. I., University of Calcutta, 1942, p. 359, fn.5.
71. Sen, Sukumar, *Vaṅga Bhūmikā,* Calcutta, 1974, p.319; *Prāchīn Bāṅglā O Bāṅgālī,* Visva Bharati, 1972, p. 39.
72. Bhattacharyya, A.T., *Sun and Serpent Worship,* Calcutta, 1977, p. 28.
73. Sen, Sukumar & Mandal, Panchanan (ed.), *Rūparāmer Dharmamaṅgal,* Burdwan, B.S. 1351; Introduction.
74. Watters, T., *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India,* Ed. T.W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushell, vol. II, London, 1904-5, p. 115; Beal, S (Tr.), *Buddhist Records of Western Countries,* London, 1906, p. 274, II. 118, 121- 22.
75. Vasu, N. N., *Vaṅger Jātīya Itihāsa, Rājanya-Kāṇḍa* (in Bengali), IV. 88, 90. *Mahādeva-kārikā* quoted by Umesh Candra Sharma; Kulapañjī by Rāmadeva.
76. *Jayati jagadekavandhurlokadvitayasya sampado hetuḥ parahitamūrtirdṛṣṭa phalānumeya sthitir-dharmaḥ'— E.I.,* Vol., XII, pp. 65-79; Vol., XIX, pp. 115-25; *Kāmrūpaśāsanāvalī,* pp. 11 17.
77. Kānsonā, now called Rangamati in the district of Murshidabad, on the right bank of the Bhagirathi, six miles south of Berhampore in Bengal and once the capital of Śaśāṅka.
78. *Bhuvanapatirivodayanuraktomaṇḍalo yathāyathamicita karanikaravitaraṇākulitakali timira-sañcatayā prakāṣitāryadharmā — lokaḥ'* — Verses 35-37.
79. This region has been famous for Sun temples throughout the ancient period of Indian History — Sankalia, H.D., *Archaeology of Gujrat and Kathiawar,* pp. 59-60. It is worth mentioning that the organized group of silk weavers who built a noble and unequalled temple of the Sun god in 437 A.D. at Mandasor came from Lata. cf. Mandasor stone Inscription in Fleet, *CII,* Vol. III, pp. 79-88.
80. *EI,* II, p. 160.
81. *CBI,* pp. 164-169.
82. *JASB.,* LXI, pp. 77-87; *E.I.* XIV, p. 324; *Gauḍalekhamālā,* pp. 91-100; *Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā,* B.S. 1305, pp. 167-72; *CBI.,* p. 200.
83. '*yastuṅgābhyudayāśrito raviriva proudhaḥ pratāpodayaḥ'* – Verse 10 – *JASB,* LXIX, pp.190-95; *Gauḍalekhamālā,* p. 113; *CBI,* p. 143; *EI,* XXXVI, pp. 84 - 91.
84. '*yanmoulaou kalasena kiṁ sa bhagavān bhānuḥ śirobhūṣaṇam.* Sircar, D.C., *Śilālekha Tāmraśāsanādir Prasaṅge,* Calcutta, 1387 B.S., pp. 85-101.
85. Sircar, D.C., *Śilālekha Tāmraśāsanādir Prasaṅge,* Calcutta, 1387 B.S., pp. 85-101.
86. *RV,* I. 115.1; VI.51.1; VII.61.1; 63.1; X.37.1; *TS,* I.4.43; II.4.14.
87. *Ibid.,* I.115.1.
88. These factors have been discussed in details in Chapter VI.
89. Sircar, D.C., *Śilālekha Tāmraśāsanādir Prasaṅge,* Calcutta, 1387 B.S., p.115.
90. "*yadīya ruchi lobhitaḥ sa bhagavannābhaḥ pānthatāṁ tyājediti vichintayanniyatamāhi* SK. p.,v. 46.
91. "*rājatam ravim cakre yo haimam Navagrāmbhojam*"- Verses 55.91. 30.1-2.
92. *Sāmb.P.*
93. *EI,* Vol. XXXVI, pp. 81 ff.

94. Kundu, S.N., *Prācīn Vaṅge Paurāṇic Dharma O Deavabhāvanā* (in Bengali), Burdwan University, Burdwan, 1996, p. 349; *EI*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 89 ff.
95. *EI*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 92 ff: Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, II, p. 104.
96. 1075-84 A.D.; son of Viśvarūpa and a Brāhmaṇa feudatory under the Pālas.
97. "*Maunāditya-sahasraliṅga-kamalārdhāṅgīna-nārāyaṇa dvi someśvara-phalgunātha-Vijayādityahvayanam kritī sa* (*pra*) *sādamacīkaraddiviṣadāṁ kedāradevasya khyātasyottaramānasasya khananaṁ satraṁ vaṭe cākṣaye*".
98. *Pracaṇḍaraśmeriva caṇḍamojaḥ*- verse 55. *PIHC*, p. 23, pt. I, p. 36; Sircar, D.C., *Epigraphic Discoveries of East Pakistan*, p. 40.
99. *IB*, pp. 149-57.
100. *IB*, Vol. III, pp. 25-35; *CBI*, p. 350; Kielhorn, *EI*, VI, pp. 203-207; *JASB.*, Vol. VI, pp. 88-97.
101. *E.I.*, II, p. 350; *Gaudalekhamālā*, p. 127; *CBI*, p. 370.
102. This tradition is also recorded in *Pag Sam Jon Zane.* cf. *JASB*, 1898, p. 20. In a *Champū-kāvya* called *Udayasundarī kathā,* composed by Soddhala, a poet of Gujarat in the eleventh century A.D., and published in the Gaekwad Oriental Series, Dharmapāla is said to have belonged to the family of Māndhātā (p. 4). As Māndhātā is a well-known mythical king of the solar race, this reference supports the view that the Pālas belonged to the solar race.
103. *Rāmacarita, p.* IX.
104. Quoted in Banerji, R.D., *Bāṅgālār Itihāsa*, Part I, 2nd ed. (in Bengali), p. 168, f.n. 18.
105. Tārānātha, *Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien*, German translation by A. Schiefner, pp. 208-9. Tārānātha tells us that this successor was Devapāla, but according to Buston (*History of Buddhism.* translated by Dr. B. Obermiller, Heidelberg 1932, p.156), he was Dharmapāla.
106. Pālas *of Bengal* [Memoirs of the (Royal) Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. V, No. 3], Calcutta, 1915, p. 46.
107. This view, originally propounded by Mr. Prabhas Candra Sen, has been restated at some length by Mr. J. C. Ghosh (*IHQ.* IX. 484-85).
108. *JASB*, Vol. VI, pp. 88-97; *EI*, Vol. VI, pp. 203-07; *IB*, pp. 25-41; *CBI*, pp. 350-353.
109. *CBI*, pp. 236-240.
110. *IB*, p. 57.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
112. *Ibid.*, p.106.
113. *Ibid.*
114. Vidyānanda, Tejacandra (Ed.), *Brāhmaṇa Sarvasvam* of Halāyudha, Calcutta, 1290 B.S., pp. 12-13.
115. *HBP*, p. 442.
116. *EI*, XV, pp. 275-86; *IB*, Vol. III, pp. 57-67; Bhandarkar, D.D., *Inscriptions of Northern India*, No.1682; *Pālas of Bengal*, p. 105; *Sāhitya*, 128 B.S., pp. 81ff.
117. *IB*, p.71.
118. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, p. 78ff.
119. Sircar, D.C., *Pāla-Sena Yuger Vamsānucarit*, 1982, Calcutta, 1982, p. 135.
120. *ASIAR*, 1930-34, p. 257
121. Madanapādā (Faridpur) Copperplate of 1220 A.D. (*JASB*, Vol. 65, 1896, Part I, pp.8-9; *IB*, Vol. III, p. 140; *Indian Historical Quarterly.* IV, p. 760; *CBI*, p. 312); Calcutta Sahitya Parisat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. I, March 1926, pp. 78-86; *IB*, Vol. III, pp.177-180); Edilpur (Faridpur district) Copperplate of

Sūryasena (*JASB* (N.S.), Vol. X, 1914. p. 99; *IB*, Vol. III, p. 118; *CBI*, p. 334. *Ibid*, p. 9; *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. II, 1926, p. 81).

122. Daniel, H.H. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry:* Vidyākara*'s Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa*, Cambridge, 1965, Section 7.
123. Banerjee, S.C., (Ed.), Calcutta, 1965.
124. Bandopadhyay, Suresh Candra, *Saṁskrit Sāhitye Bāṅgalīr Avadān* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1369 B.S.
125. Dhoyī, *Pavana-dūta*, Verse 30.
126. *Kumārasambhava*, 5.38.
127. *Brāhmaṇa-sarvasyam*, *Maṅgalācaram*, Ed. Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1958, p. 1.
128. *Ibid.*
129. The *Purāṇa* is believed to have started in eighth Century A.D. and come to present form in fifteenth/sixteenth century A.D.
130. *āsanaṁ svāgataṁ pādyamarvyamācamanīyakaṁ madhuparkācamasnānaṁ vasanābharaṇāni ca gandhapuṣpe dhūpadīpou naivedya vandanam.* Apte, V.S., *The Students' Sanskrit English Dictionary*, 1988, p. 570.
131. The mystical syllable is considered as a preservative like armour.
132. *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Gaṇeśa Khandam, Unavimsa Adhyāya*, pp. 250-251.
133. It is believed to have been compiled in Bengal in the 13th century A.D.
134. Tarkaratna, Panchanan (Ed.), *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, Calcutta, 1396 B.S., *Uttara Khaṇḍa*, Chapter XIII, p. 340.
135. Chakravarty, Jahnavi Kumar, *Āryasaptaśatī O Gauḍavaṅga* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1378 B.S., verse no. 331, p. 221.
136. *Ibid.*, verse no. 648, pp. 297-98
137. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
138. Dikshit, K.N., *Excavations at Pāhārpur*, Delhi, 1938, p. 60.
139. Dasgupta, Subrata Kumar, 'History of the Sūrya Image in Bengal', *Folklore*, December 1967, p. 424-25.
140. *SVRM*, p. 257, *VRM* 2324.
141. *SVRM*, pp. 235, 238, 240, 256.
142. *SVRM*, p. 239.
143. *SVRM*, pp. 254, 256; *DM*, p. 73.
144. *MMC*, pp. 15-20.
145. Malda Museum Nos. RSR-15, 16, 27; Bhattacharya, Malay Shankar, *Art in Stone: A Catalogue of Sculptures in Malda Museum*, Malda, 1982, pp. 18-20.
146. cf. Bhattacharya, P.K., *Iconography of Sculptures*, Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Museum, Darjeeling, 1983, p. 2.
147. *Loc. Cit.*
148. This feature occurs in the ninth century A.D. in the Rajshāhi and Bogra images only.
149. The *karaṇḍa- mukuṭa* is prescribed for all the gods other than Brahmā and Rudra who are endowed with *jaṭāmukuṭa* and Nārāyaṇa who should exclusively wear *kirīṭa-mukuṭa.* It is a short and small *karaṇḍa* (basket)-shaped crown, indicating subordination in status. This is characteristic of various kinds of goddesses and minor deities. *EHI*, pp. 29-30.
150. *SVRM*, pp. 261, 264; *MMC*, p. 20.
151. *SVRM*, p. 259.
152. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

153. *DM*, p. 74.
154. *MMC*, pp. 16, 17, 19.
155. *IBBS*, p. 173.
156. Dasgupta, Chittaranjan, *Acharya Jogeshcandra Purakriti Bhavan, Descriptive Catalogue*, (in Bengali), Bishnupur, 1390 B.S., pp. 35-36.
157. Dasgupta, Subrata Kumar, 'History of the Sūrya Image in Bengal', *Folklore*, December 1967, p. 427.
158. *SVRM*, pp. 250, 253.
159. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
160. *BSHI*, pp. 185-197, 363-371.
161. Naogāon: 9; Niyamatpur-3; Godagari: 3.
162. Dasgupta, Subrata Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 426.
163. *HB-I*, p. 457.
164. Bhattacharya, P.K., *op.cit.*, p. 11, pl. II, fig.4.
165. *BSHI*, pp. 182, 366.
166. Koṭālipārā image, *HB-I*, p. 457 and a Faridpur image.
167. *SVRM*, p. 246.
168. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
169. *BSHI*, pp. 185-195, 363-371.
170. *Ibid.*
171. - 4, Tanor – 2.
172. Gāzole -1, Bamangola -1.
173. *SVRM*, p. 252.
174. Sun images from Baria, Manda, (Rajshāhi) and Deopara-Godagari (Rajshāhi) *SVRM*, pp. 242, 245.
175. *SVRM*. p. 242.
176. Sun images from some unknown place in Rajshāhi and Badhair, Tanor (Rajshāhi), *SVRM*, pp. 241, 242.
177. *HBP*, p. 424.
178. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 82.
179. *Ibid.*
180. Kundu, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
181. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
182. *Ibid.*
183. Sastri, H.P., *Discovery of Living Buddhism in Bengal*, Calcutta.
184. '*Brāhmī māheśvarī caiva vaiṣṇavī caiva te tanuḥ / Tridhā yasya svarūpantu bhānorbhāsvān prasidatu//* Bibliotheca Indica Edition, Ch. 109, V. 71.
185. *SVRM*, pp. 247-248, pl. 240, VRM 654; *AR-VRS*, 1925-26, p. 9; *BSHI*, p. 193.
186. Sarkar, K. C., "A New Form of Sūrya from Vārendra", *IHQ*, vol. VI, No. 1, March 1930, pp. 465-70; P. Jash, *History of Śaivism, Appendix on Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava*, p.145ff.
187. Chatterjee, A., *Padma-Purāṇa – A Study*, pp. 193-94. The *Śāradātilakam*, XIVA.2, emphasizes the syncretic character of the worship of the Sun.
188. *AR-VRS*. 1932-33, pp. 15-16, pl.1, fig.1; *DHI*. p. 550, pl. XLVII.3.
189. *DHI*, pp. 547-548, pl. XLVIII.3; Bhattacharyya, Dipak Candra, *Iconology of Composite Images*, p. 25, fig. 20.
190. *DHI*, pp. 547-548; P. Jash, op. cit., p. 138
191. Aunadale, N. 'Pāla Inscription in the Indian Museum, *JPASB*, Vol. 4, 1968, p. 101.

192. Majumdar, R.C., *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 334.
193. *HBP*, p. 438.
194. *Ibid.*, p. 440.
195. *SWAI-P*, p. 71.
196. Hazra, R.C., *op. cit.* p. 171.
197. *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (Bombay Ed.), 1892, p. 89.
198. *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*, XLII.37.
199. *Ibid.*, XLIII. 14; XLVII. 29.
200. *Ibid.*, XLVII.26, 29. *Puṣya* is the eighth lunar mansion or *Nakṣatra.*
201. *Ibid.*, XXIV. 6.
202. Datta, Kalidas, 'Two Saura images from the District of 24 Parganas', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IX, March, 1933.
203. Representation of the wedding of Śiva with Pārvatī. See "Cosmic Wedding of Śiva-Pārvatī", *Glimpses of Hindu Cult and Culture*, Pranabananda Jash, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1997.
204. Vasu, N. N., *Vaṅger Jātīya Itihāsa, Rājanya-Kāṇḍa* (in Bengali), IV. 88, 90. *Mahādeva-kārikā* quoted by Umesh Candra Sharma; Kulapañjī by Rāmadeva.
205. Sircar, D. C., *Śilālekh Tāmraśāsanādir Prasaṅge*, Calcutta, 1387 B.S., pp. 85-101.
206. *Bṛhat- saṁhitā*, V.19-20.
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208. *Sāmba P.*, 30.18, 32.12; 37.19.
209. *Ibid.*, 39.41.
210. *Ibid.*, Ch.I. 47-83. cf. Chakravarti, C., *op. cit.*, pp. 38-44, 80-82.
211. Quoted by Belvalkar, S.K. and Ranade, R.D., *History* of *Indian Philosophy*, vol. II, p. 298.
212. Sircar, D.C., *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*, p. 61.
213. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 361.
214. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 77.
215. Mitra, Haridasa, 'Sadāśiva Worship in Early Bengal', *JASB*, Vol. 29, 1933, p. 205.
216. *EI*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 84f
217. *EI*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 92 ff: Sircar, D. C., *Select Inscriptions*, II, p. 104.
218. *Skanda Purāṇa, Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa*, Ch. 133, pp. 508 ff.
219. *Ibid.*, Ch. 27, Verse 52.
220. SK. P. VII, 1, 139, II.
221. M.P. XXII.11.
222. *Pātālakhaṇḍa*, Chaps. 19, 21 and 22.
223. Dey, N. L., *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*, (3rd Ed.), New Delhi, 1971, p. 125.
224. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Chapter - 5

SUN IMAGES : STUDIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ICONOGRAPHY

The study of religion cannot advance to any extent without an analysis of iconography, particularly in India where image-worship forms the very pivot of the popular religion. The artistic pieces provide us with encouraging facts for the proper assessment of the particular ideas, concepts and practices of each cult. The study of Sun cult in the *Prācyadeśa* (Eastern India) would remain incomplete in the absence of descriptions of iconography of the Sun god.

The growth and development of the cult of Sūrya necessitated the making of his images in various materials. However, it is presumable that long before the inception of any cult, the Sun god and his manifold aspects were being represented by means of various symbols from the Vedic times onwards. These symbols were necessary for the proper performances of the ancient Vedic rites. In the religious ceremonies of the time, Sun was represented by a wheel, which very effectively symbolized the apparent movement of the Sun. Sometimes, the imagery was less clear; thus, a round golden plate or a firebrand stood for the Sun.[1] Among the extant antiquarian remains of the Vedic and early post-Vedic period one can recognize the symbolical forms of the deity. A spoked wheel and its different forms are commonly found on the punch-marked coins, the origin of which has been traced by Cunningham prior to 1000 B.C.[2] Some of the spoked wheel symbols can well be taken to symbolize the Sun god. Sun also finds representation as a 'rayed disc' on ancient Indian coins.

On a number of very early types of punch-marked coins, small-elongated hexagonal bars of silver appear with several marks, which look like unsophisticated representations of a lotus. Also on other ancient coins, occur a few symbols that seem to be the variant forms of a lotus.[3] Lotus is closely connected with the Sun from the earliest period. The association of lotus with the Sun was because of the fact that the opening and closing of the flower timed with the rising and setting of the Sun. The Purāṇas emphasize the connection, and enjoin the execution in art of a twelve-petalled lotus, on different petals of which figures of the diverse aspects of the solar deity are to be placed with the divinity *Bhāskara* on the central pericarp (*karṇikā*). Thus, in Indian art the Sun god was represented by various symbols. When he came to be represented anthropomorphically, the wheel and lotus were not left out; the wheel became one of the major symbols of Viṣṇu, an *Āditya* and lotus was positioned in both the hands of the Sun icons. Moreover, the wheel and the lotus appear as solar emblems separately on several coins, seals, clay tablets and copperplate inscriptions of the Gupta period afterwards.[4]

Passing on to Bengal we cannot say with certainty whether the iconic representation of Sūrya in ancient Vaṅga preceded its worship in symbolic form as was in vogue in different parts of India where a wheel, a round golden plate, a lotus, flower, etc. were commonly used by the Vedic ritualists in the performance of sacrifices. Neither have we come across at the present state of our knowledge any punch-marked nor cast-coins containing the representations of these objects like the ones ('200 B.C. to the end of the first century B.C.' according to Allan) of the Uddehika and Pañcāla Mitra chiefs like Sūryamitra and Bhānumitra, which bears on their reverse sides the solar disc, placed on a pedestal. The representation of Sun through the symbol of wheel continued several centuries before Christ down to the fourth century A.D., as it is known from the Susunia Rock inscription[5] (fourth century A.D.) discovered at Bankura, West Bengal, where *Chakrasvāmin* (Viṣṇu) is represented by a wheel. The epigraphic records discovered so far in Bengal hardly contain any indication as to when the image-worship of the Paurāṇic Sun god had its beginning. However, before we analytically describe the representative types of Sun images from Bengal in terms of an evolutionary process of iconic representations, a few observations need to be made about some of their specialties for a better comprehension of the subject.

I

A large number of the iconographic representation of the Sun god from eastern India are products of the developed phase of the estern Indian art and even an informal appraisal of them would bring out the more or less stereotyped elements of their iconography. The largest number of Sūrya images is found in standing posture. In this position, the divinity is always in *samapādasthānaka* pose, except in one (Pl. 6b) where he is in *tribhaṅga.*[6] Seated images of the god are indeed very rare, only three representing the god in *vajraparyāṅkāsana.*

The god usually holds two full-blown lotuses by their stalks, which rise to the level of the shoulders. Another feature (mostly noticeable in the East Bengal images) is a pair of daggers tucked on either side of the bejeweled waist belt. A fewer images in East Bengal and almost all from west and north Bengal would show the god with a long sword in a scabbard dangling on the left and held by a diagonal sword-trap. In one image only, the sword is placed on the right side.[7] An extra small dagger is found tucked on the right in a few of the north-west Bengal images. A *chatra* is depicted at the top of the *prabhāvalī* in many images from East Bengal.

The god is adorned with *kirīṭamukuṭa,*[8] the ornamented *kaṭibandha* (*avyaṅga*) and various other jewelry. The breastplate *(kañcuka)* is prominent, the interlacing outlines of which while passing round the shoulders, either make the form of a reef knot on the chest or a designed armour giving an impression of a diaphanous garment for the upper body. The former is a characteristic cognizance for most of the solar icons from East Bengal and in such cases, the *yajñopavīta* is not visible on the body. In the north Bengal specimens, the *upavīta* is always present, which is, however, a long one like in the majority of Viṣṇu sculptures from the same region. In the northern and eastern India, the lower body of the divinity or at least his feet are left uncarved or covered up with high boots. Even the attendant gods and goddesses are similarly represented. Nevertheless, there are a few images in Bengal that demonstrate the bare feet of Sūrya.[9]

The principal attendants of the Sun god are the pot-bellied bearded Piṅgala, the recorder of good and bad deeds of creatures and the youthful Daṇḍī or *Daṇḍanāyaka*, standing on either side. However, they are conspicuous by their absence in a number of Sun images.[10] According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* and *Sāmba Purāṇa,* Piṅgala and Daṇḍa are to be represented on the right and left of Sūrya respectively. The vast majority of the Bengal images follow this direction. However, the *Agni Purāṇa* places Piṅgala on the left side and Daṇḍī on the right, the compliance of which is found in a few images only. Piṅgala.[11] is always represented with a pen and inkpot in his hands, while in the two hands of Daṇḍī the attributes are either *khaḍga, kheṭaka, śakti* and *akṣamālā* in one hand and the gesture of *abhaya* or *kaṭihasta* in the other. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa,* they are also to be dressed in *udīcyaveśa.* Generally, both of them wear the *karaṇḍamukuṭa* but occasionally *kirīṭamukuṭa* as well. Sometimes Piṅgala is adorned with the *jaṭāmukuṭa.*

An uncertain number of the wives of Sūrya are met in the texts. They are *Dyaus, Pṛthvī, Mahāśvetā, Saraṇyū, Sureṇu, Rājñī, Nikṣubhā, Niṣprabhā, Chāyā, Savarṇā, Saṁjñā, Suvarcasā, Prabhā, Sandhyā, ūṣā, Pratyūṣā* etc. It is difficult to say definitely whether these are synonyms or individual personalities as are variously made out in some of the Purāṇas. According to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa,* the goddess in front of the Sun god is *Mahāśvetā.*[12] The two *cāmaradhāriṇīs* on his sides, according to the *Agni Purāṇa,* are Rājñī and Niṣprabhā (or Nikṣubhā). The two arrow-shooting attendants have been identified as ūṣā and Pratyūṣā.[13] Interestingly, some sculptures[14] show four arrow-shooting females, two of them occasionally on horseback. However, quite a number of sculptures do not represent such females at all.

Many Sun sculptures from Bengal show Aruṇa driving the Sun god's chariot with a whip in his right hand and holding the trunk of a *makara* with the left. An image[15] shows the god accompanied only by Aruṇa driving the seven-horsed car (Pl. 9a). The trunk of the *makara* has been interpreted by many scholars in different ways. According to N.B. Sanyal,.‘ Aruṇa, the charioteer, has his seat on the head of a *makara*'.[16] N. K.Bhattashali[17] described it as ‘a curious gaping biped’ and equated it with ‘the *Nāga*’ or the *bhujaṅga-rajju* of the *Matsya Purāṇa,* which serves to rein the seven horses[18] In this connection, we may refer to the description of the Sun's chariot as found in the *Viśvakarmā-Śilpa*[19]: *‘evamuktarathastasya makaradhvaja iṣyate’* (‘His chariot thus described should have an ensign of *makara*’). Therefore, the *makara* in question is nothing else but the ornamental *Makara*-head of the chariot mentioned in the iconographic text. The idea is clearly discernable from the profile of the war chariots with similar *makara*-heads illustrated on at least two terracotta plaques from Pāhārpur temple.[20] However, in three images from East Bengal,[21] Aruṇa is seated behind a peacock. In two of them, the bird is shown in profile while Aruṇa holds its neck by his left hand. This is simply a replacement of the *makara-dhvaja* by the *mayūra-dhvaja*, which is very common with the front-heads of the palanquins and boats of the same region even in the present day.

In the developed Sun icons, the chariot of the deity is drawn by seven horses with Aruṇa seated or half-embedded into the *ratha*. One Sūrya image from Bengal shows only one horse,[22] another with four horses,[23] the third (Pl. 4a) with eight[24] and the rest with seven. However, no horse is seen in a number of Sun images. It is difficult to suggest that the absence of the horses or the chariot in solar sculptures is signs of early specimen.

The largest number of Sūrya images is two-armed, though his images or those of his different aspects with four hands and (very rarely six) are also not unknown. Two four-armed images of Sūrya (VRM nos. 734 & 654) are known from Bengal and both show the god seated. The introduction of more than two hands came to be an important aspect of the development of the Sun image in the early and late period.[25] The *Matsya Purāṇa* (Vaṅgavasi edition),[26] *Viṣṇudharmottara*[27] and *Sūryopaniṣad*[28] (a very late work) prescribe that the Sun god should have four arms (*Caturbāhu*). The *Viśvakarmā Śāstra* describes many of the *Ādityas* having four arms with their respective emblems two of which must be lotus flowers, held in the front right and left hands. MacDonnell[29] is of the opinion that these two additional hands were carved to hold the emblems and the natural ones were employed for any action or pose, *i.e. abhaya*- and *varadamudrā*. However, S.V. Venkatesvara[30] disagrees with him. In fact, the additional hands were needed for action. Later on, due to the influence of Tāntricism and other sects of Hinduism Sūrya was also shown, though very rarely, with six, eight, ten or twelve hands. The combined images of the Sun god with other Hindu gods come under this category.

The fact that Sūrya is one of the twelve *Ādityas* was very much in the mind of the Bengal sculptors of the mediaeval period. Naturally, we have over a dozen of images where the god is depicted along with eleven other *Ādityas*, the latter placed on the upper part of the *prabhāvalī*. They are, in fact, miniature versions of Sūrya himself, all two-armed and carrying two full-blown lotuses in their hands. They may either be standing or sitting irrespective of the posture of the Sun god. Some times, Gaṇeśa is added to them. That Sūrya is also one of the nine *Grahas* was also very much known. Quite a number of images show Sūrya surrounded by miniature *Grahas* that is specifically directed by the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.[31] Two images show on the *prabhāvalī* the miniature representations of the Hindu Triad, the eight *Dikpālas* and the *Aṣṭanāgas*. About the depiction of various deities with the Sun god, the *Matsya Purāṇa* mentions the fact rather briefly *(nānādevaganairyukta)*. The *Agni Purāṇa* (51) after describing the figure of Sūrya continues with the details of the other *Ādityas* and their *Śaktis*, the *Grahas*, the *Dikpālas*, the *Aṣṭanāgas* etc. It is deserving of note that images with representations of additional deities are more numerous in east

Bengal. An important iconographic feature found in various texts is the great effulgence *(mahāteja)* of Sūrya, which occur in several images by two or three layers of flames issuing out from the body of the divinity.

Having noticed the general as well as some specific iconographic characteristics, we now proceed to discuss about the Sun images in Bengal as far chronologically as possible. It may be noted that in most cases motifs such as Vidyādharas, *kīrttimukha, gaja-śārdūla* and other general decorative elements have been ignored.

II

Sūrya is not depicted in human form in early Bengal art until a comparatively late period. Before the evolution of real cult-icons of the Sun god, there are a few human representations of the Sun on the terracotta of the Maurya-Śuṅga period. The earliest representation of the Sun god in human form is found in a beautiful terracotta mould datable to c. second century B.C.

Second Century B.C. Terracotta Winged Sūrya from Tamluk

The beautiful terracotta from Tamluk (Midnapore), which displays a winged male figure[32] standing in frontal pose datable to *c.* 2nd century B.C., deserves mention at first (Pl. 1a). Each of the two hands placed on the waistband *(kaṭisūtra)* holds long stalks of full-blossomed lotus *(vikaśita padma)*. The figure wears round-shaped earrings as well as a beautifully fashioned *kaṇṭhī* decorated with floral medallions. It is also shown with a stylistic *śirastraka* slightly tapering to an ornamented top and armlets and beaded round-shaped bracelets arranged in four strands. The figure wears a thick waistband the middle of which is characterized by the presence of knotted *kaṭisūtras* in small cylindrical forms acting as the *kaṭisūtragranthi*. The waistband is further furnished with small tinkling bells. The waist-girdle worn by the figure is slightly different from the ones worn by other figures of divinity. The most interesting feature is the delineation of the wings beside the upper parts of the arms. Two conical-shaped objects depicted in the form of cluster of plantains representing the row of bananas are displayed on either side of the lower part of the stela. A pitcher-like auspicious object with ear of corn sprouting forth from it is placed on the pericarp of the petalled lotus.

The association of wings with the image of Sūrya seems to find its origin in the Ṛgvedic concept of the Sun. He is described as the beautiful winged celestial bird *Garutmān* in some of the Ṛgvedic hymns.[33] *Suparṇa* (well winged) is no other than the Sun itself. Therefore, we may conclude that the figure stands for Sūrya (the Sun god) in one of its earliest representations in iconic form in terracotta. Two full-blown lotuses held by the figure is again a pointer to his identity as the Sun. The round-shaped *karṇa-bhūṣaṇas* seem to resemble *Sūrya-mukhī* (helianthus annus) flower, which has been traditionally been associated with Sun worship in Bengal. The plantain tree is also traditionally connected with Sun worship. It is, thus, clear that the winged figure represents the Vedic Sun god Sūrya at its nascent stage of iconic development.

The representation of Sūrya in the form of a winged human figure,[34], was not, however, a new one in the context of greater Indian art as such. In the sculptural panels of Bharhut[35] (Sāñchī) datable to second century B.C., there are beautiful representations of winged human figures carved out in Chunar red sand stone. It is true that the basic idea of identifying the Sun god with the beautiful winged celestial bird *Garutmān (divyaḥ sa suparṇa garutmān)* came from the Ṛgvedic hymn (1.164.46).

Chandraketugarh terracotta sculpture of first century B.C./A.D.

Another beautiful terracotta sculpture of first century B.C./A.D., from Chandraketugarh,[36] 24 Parganas (Pl. 1b) is very significant. The object represents a regally posed male figure seated on a chariot in European style. The chariot is drawn by four galloping horses, which is unique in Bengal. Two of the horses are centrally placed and the rest of the two shown in profile. He has behind his head a circular nimbus and also wears a turbaned crown typical of the period and a garland with a pendant. The figure is flanked by two females, who passionately cling to the main figure by the neck. The chariot stands on a raised circular platform on the left corner of which is found a funny torso of a monstrous demon (the symbol of darkness?) being pierced through by the sharp-edged rolling wheel of the chariot.

The figure wears a pair of circular ornate earrings that reach its shoulders. The oval-shaped face, the strongly accentuated ridged eye-brow, the very protruding round eyes, the straight nose (though not very prominent), the relaxed lips and divine smile all indicate the characteristic features of the Kuṣāṇa period. The round-shaped turban-like headdress and the elaborately ornate nimbus also reveal the characteristic features of the Kuṣāṇa period. All the iconographic features along with the sacred thread thrown across the right shoulder of the bare-bodied figure indicate its immediate association with divinity.

In the Ṛgvedic hymns, the Sun god is often described as moving on a car drawn by one, seven or several ruddy horses.[37] There are a number of Sūrya images belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era, which show the god seated on a chariot. That the terracotta figure under discussion, represents the Sun god Sūrya becomes evident if we take into account the iconographic motifs of some Sūrya images of the period found in different parts of India. One Sūrya image comes from the Saptasamudri well which is now in the Mathura Museum.[38] Here the Sun god is seated on his haunches inside a one-wheeled car drawn by four horses. He holds a lotus bud in his right hand and a scimitar in the left. He is clad in heavy tunic and top boots are tracable in his partially visible legs. He has a Sun disc behind his head and a pair of wings attached to his shoulder. Another such image of Sūrya is depicted in the relief from Bhājā Vihāra[39] near Pune, Western Ghats. It shows the god as riding a four-horsed chariot along with two women. The wheels of the chariot pass over grossly proportioned nude demons. The illustration of the Chandraketugarh Sūrya image under discussion is remarkably similar to the Bhājā Sūrya image in stone. A part of the terracotta chariot with remnants of four horses discovered from Bhīṭā of the same period is a close parallel of the present specimen. Again, in a relief on the stone railing at Bodh-Gayā, the Sun god is found riding a one-wheeled chariot drawn by four horses with two arrow-shooting female figures on either side. It appears that somehow the style of depicting the Sun god spread from western to eastern India and even inspired the Bengal artists to produce the terracotta plaques referred to above.

The sacred thread worn by the bare bodied figure is very much thick in shape and consists of three strands. The style of its representation is distinctly found in the sculpture of Agni hailing from the same Chandraketugarh area. In the *Ṛgveda* (10.88.6), Sūrya is identified with Agni, another important god of the Vedas.

One of the significant findings in this terracotta Sun image is that Aruṇa, the charioteer of the Sun god appears, only in its upper bust between his dangling legs. He wears a small cap-like headdress. It serves as an example for the continuance of the art tradition through the ages with the Kashipur (24 Parganas) Sūrya image discussed below. The two female deities flanking the Sun god may stand for ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. They are adorned with circular earrings and have their respective coiffure arranged in the shape of cap-like headdress.

We may now examine the factors behind the Sun images mentioned above. According to Cunningham,[40] the four horses and the general execution in the early Sun images largely bear a resemblance to the representation of Helios — the Greek Sun god. J.N. Banerjea, however, suggested that the Ṛgvedic description of Sūrya as drawn by one, three, four or seven horses might have led to this sort of representation. In the *Ṛigveda,*[41] the number of horses of the Sun's chariot is seven and no particular importance is given to number four. Iconographic literatures of India specifically mention seven horses for chariot of the Sun god. On the other hand, the Irānian Sun god Mithra traverses[42] the wide firmament in his four-horsed chariot and the Greek Sun god Helios has been famous for his quadrigo. It is well known that Mithra was represented in human form for the first time in the Hellenistic courts in association with Greek Sun god — Helios. Therefore, it is suggested that the Sun images of the early period came to be evolved under the Hellenistic impact. In this tradition, the Mithraic tradition was already mixed up. However, the influence of the Hellenistic tradition was confined to the four horse-motifs only. The features of the Sun god along with attendants like ūṣā and Pratyūṣā and the chariot are very much Indian in character. The absence of the Central Asian features like high boots, Irānian coat, etc in these sculptures clearly shows that these images derived the alien impact through the Hellenistic stream[43] and not directly. In the succeeding period, the images were modeled under the influence of the Central Asian tradition, which probably entered India in the wake of the Kuṣāṇa invasion.

First Century A.D. Terracotta Udīcyaveśī Sūrya from Hadipur (24 Parganas)

A First century A.D. terracotta seal with a male figure on one side (Pl. 2a) has been found from Hadipur (North 24 Parganas).[44] The figure stands facing to front in rigid *samapādasthānaka* pose on a slightly raised platform. There are lotus plants on its right side and a banana tree on its left side. Behind the plantain tree stands horse in an east-west direction. The figure wears a headdress of kausia cap type as well as earrings. A square-shaped small symbol is also noticed on the right shoulder of the figure. The right hand holds the stalk of a larger lotus fully petalled with the pericarp in the centre. A small, full-blown lotus is depicted beneath the right hand on the right side of the larger lotus. On the left side of the larger lotus is found a lotus with its bud only; the left hand is placed akimbo. The figure wears a close fitting jacket forming part of the longer that is gathered at the anklets. It also wears soft-padded boots.

Since the figure in *samapādasthānaka* and in flat kausia cap-like headdress holds the stalk of the lotus by one of his hands and wears northerner's dress (*udīcyaveśa)*, it stands for the Sun god in one of its most formative stages. The alien influence in solar iconography was now slowly but steadily infiltrating into the mainland from northwestern India. The display of the horse, which is connected with all the Sun gods and the plantain tree, which is also associated with the Sun worship, also confirms the identification of the deity with the Sun god.

As already noted, the figure under review is clad in the tunic and the soft-padded boots, which are the well-known iconographic traits of the Sūrya images of the north. This is one of the archaic representations of it ever met with in Bengal. In the *Bṛhat-samhitā* (57.46-47), we find one of the earliest descriptions of Sūrya images in the *udīcyaveśa*. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (Ch, 67.2.16) lays down that he (the Sun god) should be covered with a coat mail and he should wear a northerner's dress. According to J.N. Banerjea, the writers of such texts thus emphasize the foreign origin of this type of Sun cult, which was introduced into India in the beginning of the Christian era or even earlier.

The display of three lotuses is also very interesting. It does not appear to be an isolated art motif of this particular divine figure. On the contrary, it appears to have served as a significant art-motif even for the icon-makers of the successive periods. The Kashipur (North 24 Parganas) Sun image of late Gupta period also shows the deity with three full-blown lotuses in each of its two hands.

Second century A.D. Terracotta Seal with a round object representing the Sun

Symbolic representation of the Sun god even in the Second century A.D. Bengal is evidenced by a terracotta seal[45] from Berachampa (North 24 Parganas). It displays a boat with a mast carrying a banner. Above it, there is a round object representing the Sun in the sky. The accompanying legend in Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī–Brāhmī has been read as *Bhajotha dijre (or jri) ssudhrdho (=Bhajatha dvijeshu udadhau)*, which *means*: "You take resort into the Brāhmaṇas (while) at sea". The most important point is the display of the Sun on the seal along with an advice for the seafarers to take resort unto the Brāhmaṇas while at sea. It shows to what extent Sun worship had infiltrated into the various strata of the society in early Vaṅga.

Third century A.D. Seal staff : aniconic representation of Sūrya

Aniconic representation of the Sun probably continued in the next century as well, which is tracable in a hemispherical terracotta seal[46] from Chandraketugarh and now in the collection of the AMC (AMC.T 8521). The seal datable to *c.* 3rd century A.D. displays a female figure. She wears an elaborate headdress and stands to front with her right hand akimbo and the left hand stretched out to her left. The left hand points to a staff rising from a water reservoir (with two lotuses) and fitted to a pole, which is topped by a canopy over her head. The depiction of the staff rising from the water and flanked by two lotuses is quite significant. In the *Ṛgveda* (4.13.5), Sūrya has been called the pillar of the sky. We may also refer to the Sūrya pillar from Nagarjunakonda[47] of the 2nd century A.D. Thus, the staff for the pillar of the sky may be taken as personifying the Sun.

Horse and lotus on a terracotta seal

Theriomorphic representation of the Sun was not also probably unknown in Bengal. On one side of a terracotta seal[48] is represented a big fully petalled lotus rising from a pond. Also depicted are the two galloping horses, which turn their heads to a person riding on one of them. The presence of the equestrian beside the full-blown lotus may indicate the need of protecting the pond from desecration, which could have excluded its use for religious purpose. The legend *Dhesido (desitah)* in Kharoṣṭhī in left field is very important. The rider might have been instructed (*desitah*) to guard the pond as it was perhaps kept aside exclusively for the growth of lotus flowers. *Ṛgveda* (10.142.8) also emphasizes the need of digging ponds or tanks for having full-blown lotuses besides for the supply of pure drinking water (9.110.5). The second horse without any rider may be taken to have symbolically represented the presence of the Sun god.

The extant Sūrya figures of the early Gupta period are not very many in number. However, they seldom fail to show most of the foreign elements.

Open-bodied booted Sūrya from Harinarayanpur (24 Parganas)

A stone plaque from Harinarayanpur (South 24 Parganas) and datable to early fourth-fifth century A.D. shows a male figure (Pl. 2b) in *samapādasthānaka.*[49] The two hands hold two full-blossomed lotuses by their stalks. A flat-cap like headdress crowns the head. The figure is adorned with long earrings, necklace and torque. He is also found as clad in a coat, trousers and boots. Undoubtedly, the figure represents the Sun god in his *udīcyaveśa.* The two pillar-like objects remind us of the Sūrya pillar of the second century A.D. from Nagarjunakonda. The image under discussion can definitely be taken as the next significant stage in the evolution of the solar iconography. The beginning in this direction was made by denuding the upper part of the body of the deity of its peculiar *udīcyaveśa* of the time. In addition, this was done without sacrificing the artistic beauty of the iconic representation. The lower part of the *udīcyaveśa* along with the booted feet pales into insignificance under a high-pitched Indianised version. The Sun image of the fifth century A.D. from Indian

Museum and the Kashipur (North 24 Parganas) Sūrya image of the seventh century A.D. all show gradual but steady shedding off the northerner's dress, though *avyaṅga* (waist-girdle) and boots are retained in almost all the cases. It seems that in the pre-Gupta age in Vaṅga, Sūrya in the *udīcyaveśa* was looked upon as having foreign association

It is suggested that the peculiar type of the Sūrya image worshipped all over India from the Gupta period onwards and earlier was derived from an Irānian type.[50] The extant Sūrya images of the early Gupta period, though not many in number, seldom fail to show most of the alien features as well. However, the gradual idealization of these traits and preponderance of Indian elements had already begun from the late Gupta period. If we describe a few early and late Gupta as well as early and late mediaeval images of the god hailing from Bengal, it will show that the earlier the sculptures the more prominent and less and less idealized are the foreign traits and the Indian elements are comparatively few.

Sūrya image from Kumarpur (Rajshāhi)

The Kumarpur Sūrya[51] is an extremely coagulated specimen (Pl. 3a). The slab of the image is rounded at the top with a high pedestal. On the dado of the pedestal are carved the figures of seven horses standing erect with their forelegs raised high. Above, the charioteer Aruṇa sits in the centre. Behind him is Sūrya in *samapādasthānaka* between Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. The lower portion of each from below the knees are submerged in the pedestal. The two hands of the god are bent at the elbow and raised to the shoulders, clasping stalks of full-blown lotuses (*sanāla-padma*). All are dressed alike in knee-length tunics with a corded belt in the middle. Sūrya's ornaments consist of necklace, earrings, bangles and a cap-like, low *kirita*. Though carrying bows and arrows as usual, Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā are not represented in the archer pose; the former stands facing front and the latter in slight *tribhaṅga*. All the figures are executed in low, flat relief and their sharp and rigid angles and lines confine the main effect to the surface. The features of Sūrya are broad and heavy, his shoulders wide and straight. All these features together with the long tunic, open round eyes, flat and low head-dress indicate its affinity with the Kuṣāṇa sculptures of Mathurā, datable to the third century A.D. Yet, the peculiarity of the features, the kind and quality of the material used, as well as the crude, coagulated and unsophisticated appearance of the example suggest that it is probably the work of a local artist who was remotely touched by the art idiom of Mathurā.

The seven horses found in the Kumarpur relief show the departure from the custom of the Kuṣāṇa artists to provide the Sun's chariot with only two or four horses. Sūrya in standing pose may be regarded as a Gupta innovation in solar iconographic tradition.

Sūrya image from Niyamatpur (Rajshāhi)

The Niyamatpur (Naogāon, Rajshāhi)[52] Sūrya image (Pl. 3b) is executed in coarse-grained sandstone. The deity stands erect on a low pedestal between two dwarfish attendants, Piṅgala and Daṇḍī. He wears a long tunic fastened at the waist by a belt.[53] His crown is low and flat with an engraved lotus between triangular plaques above the rim. In his two hands, which are sharply bent at the elbow and raised, he holds a pair of lotuses by the stalks. He stands with his feet close to each other, but from the ankles, the legs appear to move away from each other.

Piṅgala and Daṇḍī stand swaying away from the main deity and unlike him they wear *dhotis* and hold indistinct objects in their hands. Arrow-shooting females, consorts, and Aruṇa along with the wheel and the horses of the chariot are conspicuously absent in this specimen. The only innovation is the scarf or belt introduced for the first time in these two images. The scarf round the waist is not found in the pre-Gupta reliefs. In its Kuṣāṇa type dress and headgear, position of the two hands and strict frontal standing attitude, the figure of Sūrya is similar to the Kumarpur relief, and also in style not unlike the image of the god from Bodh-Gayā dated in the 26th year of the reign of Dharmapāla. The back slab is plain and asymmetrical.

The Kumarpur and Niyamatpur images bear remarkable affinity to the Kuṣāṇa Sūrya figures of Mathurā as regards their dress and general characteristics; unlike the Mathurā images they are, however, all standing and the chariot is absent. A pre-Gupta[54] date was suggested for them by S.K. Saraswati and Nihar Ranjan Roy. However, an early Gupta period date has been assigned by J.N. Banerjea.[55] About the absence of so many iconographic features in this image, S.K. Saraswati ascribes it to a period 'when the iconography of the god had not yet been stereotyped.[56] However, it may not be taken for granted. Over a dozen of Sun images accompanied by Daṇḍī and Piṅgala only have been discovered, whose dates range from *c.* fourth to nineth century A.D. Long before the end of this period, the iconographic elements of the developed Sun icons, had been spelled out in the the *Viṣṇudharmottara* and some other Purāṇas. It is quite likely that the sculptors, in these cases, followed a text like the *Bṛhat-saṁhitā,* which even in the middle of the sixth century A.D. described the god as alone and did not elaborate about the accessory figures at all.[57]

Image on Seal

On a seal attached with the Mallasārul Copper Plate grant[58] of the time of Mahārājādhīrāja Gopacandra (sixth century A.D.). is represented *Śrī Lokanātha.* The seal bears in a relief a standing figure of a two-armed deity with a halo-like *cakra* in the background (Pl. 8b). The *cakra* that stands for the wheel of time is traditionally regarded as the solar symbol. The anthropomorphic figure may be identified as that of Sun god as there are traces of the foreparts of some horses below, in front of the figure. On the pedestal, there seems to be carved some devotees.[59]

Early Medieval Phase

The late Gupta and early mediaeval Sūrya images differ from the above in this respect that they are far more elaborate in their presentation than the above. In the icons of the medieval times, a definite tendency to the grouping and arrangement of the attendants of the god is discernible.[60] It will be necessary now to study a few representative types to notice the process of development.

A Sūrya-image[61] in black basalt from Kashipur (24 Parganas) is an excellent specimen (Pl. 5a) of the late Gupta period. The god is standing erect with a halo behind his head, holding lotus-stalks in his two upraised hands and having his legs partially inserted in the *triratha*-chariot pedestal. He wears a belt tied by a knot— a tradition that even lingers through the mid-stream images of India belonging to the Pāla period. Over the pedestal in front of the god sits Aruṇa with his body partially hidden. His left hand is gathering up the reins of the horses and the right holding a lash. Aruṇa and probably the arrow-shooting female figures, now broken away, are the only companions of the god. The god possesses a sword, the hilt and part of which is dangling by his left side and tied by a loose sling from his right shoulder. This may be reminiscent of the north Indian militarism mainly aroused by the Hūṇa invasion led by Mihirgula in sixth century A.D.; the contemporary artist could not help adapting that northern outfit and armoury for the divine image. Besides, in Hindu pantheon Sūrya or the Sun god often appears as a warrior or *kṣatra* who rides on the back of his chariot driven by seven horses obviously indicating seven colours of the Sunray from east to west, and defeats the menace of darkness. Forming a single row from left to right, the horses put their front legs upwards in a galloping manner. Seven bridles or trappings are attached to them held by the charioteer Aruṇa, whereas the composition renders the effect of a celestial car. The one-wheeled chariot is clearly outlined and the way in which the horses are treated and the two demons of darkness (?) are shown beneath the chariot reminds us not only of the earlier technique of Bodh-Gayā and Bhājā[62] but also of the terracotta plaques discovered at Chandraketugarh. The image seems to have belonged to the period earlier than that of the Sūrya image of Deorā (Bogra district, Bangladesh) discussed below.

The Kashipur image shows the deity as holding three full-blown lotuses in each of its two hands. We have already found three lotuses in the image of Sūrya in a first century A.D. terracotta seal from Hadipur (24 Parganas, North). It appears to have served as a significant art-motif handed down to the icon-makers of the succeeding periods.

The emotionalism of the eastern version is fully evident on the late Gupta image of Sūrya[63] in bluish basalt from Deorā as noted earlier and now preserved in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshāhi (Pl. 5b). The figure of Sūrya is somewhat flat but three dimensional from the ankles up to the shoulders. He is standing with a circular halo with dotted borders round the head. The halo diverges to right and left to form similar but smaller *prabhāmaṇḍalas* behind the heads of Piṅgala and Daṇḍī. The deity holds a lotus stalk in each of his two hands, which sprouts upward parallel to his ears in a bunch of one big and two tiny blossoms. The right hand is broken and above the bridge of the mutilated nose is a round *tilaka*. The broad, powerful torso of Sūrya is bare save for a short necklace of apparently beads. He also wears small circular earrings, bracelets and a flat cap-like crown (*kirīṭamukuṭa)*, which is decorated by a lotus device, carved between a pair of beaded bands. The ears are covered with twisted rolls of hair falling from beneath the crown. The god is clad in a *dhoti* tied round the waist by a girdle with an ornamental clasp in front. Along his left side is seen a short sword kept in position by means of a chain, which is intersected by a scarf passing round the waist and is knotted to the right with the ends gracefully arranged on the hip. The boots (or leggings) on his legs are only partially visible. Much of the latter is inserted into the pedestal as we find in the later Sūrya relief from Ellora[64] or in the Kashipur (24 Parganas) Sūrya of approximately the same or a little earlier date.

In front of the god, Aruṇa is seated cross-legged behind a half-lotus device, holding the whip and reins. Daṇḍī and Piṅgala stand respectively to right and left on side of Aruṇa, wearing similar dresses and ornaments including the flat-topped headgear. The former is not bearded as in latter images, and carries the pen and inkpot while the latter holds a *śūla* in his right hand and the left hand is on the hip. Two arrow-shooting goddesses Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā are represented behind half-lotus devices to the right and left of the deity. The legs of the attendant figures are also encased in boots, which like those of Sūrya, are partially hidden. On the *triratha* pedestal are the seven horses of Sūrya's chariot carved in profile with the single wheel[65] *(cf. ekacakram* of the *dhyāna)*.

The image under discussion is similar in outline to that of Kashipur. Both the images more or less 'exhibit the sublime spiritualism of the Sārnātha school combined with the emotionalism of its eastern version'.[66] However, the Deorā image undoubtedly shows some development in the treatment of the iconic type of the Sun god not present in the Niyamatpur and Kumarpur reliefs already described. The latter two had only two attendants, namely, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala. The horses of the chariot had been given in only one image. However, here the number of attendants has increased. In addition to Daṇḍī and Piṅgala on either side of Aruṇa, we also find the arrow-shooting female figures — Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā — on two sides.

The Deorā Sūrya is not much removed in point of date from the Bhumārā Sūrya sculpture, carved inside a *caitya*-window panel of the Śiva temple at Bhumārā but it introduces many new specialties absent in the latter.[67] It must be noted, however, that the Bhumārā Sūrya was an accessory figure, appearing inside one of the '*caitya*' in a temple dedicated to Śiva, while the Deorā Sūrya seems to have been the principal object of worship in a solar shrine.[68]

Here the Kuṣāṇa dress has disappeared and the image is given a complete indigenous character. However, some other features characterizing the Sun images of the subsequent centuries (the Pāla period), *e.g.* the sacred thread so prominent on the body of Sūrya and his additional attendants in the persons of *Mahāśvetā* and the two queens *viz.* Saṁjñā and Chāyā — have not yet made their appearance.

The way in which the long curls falling on the shoulders are treated and the '*trivalī*' marks are shown on the throat, the plain circular halo with beaded border, scarf passing round the waist, the long sword tied with a slanting strap on the left side, paucity of ornaments and strict simplicity of design – all these as well as the very refined treatment of the whole theme specify it as a fine specimen of Bengal sculpture of the late Gupta period. The circular halo with only a beaded border appears to be but a plain reminiscence of the exquisitely decorated halos of the Sāranātha Buddha images. The deep shadows below the eyes and round the lips accentuate the emotionalism of the full round face.[69] In point of style and execution, this image from Deorā has general resemblance with those of the panels in the Gupta temple at Deogarh. The Deorā image may be assigned to the Gupta period,[70] when the full-fledged image of the god with all his attendants might have been imported in Bengal.

J.N. Banerjea[71] has even gone to the extent of describing the Deorā sculpture as an ideal Sun image carved in the Sixth century, with full details and all the requisites for a Sun relief. For the first time, the god is shown wearing all the ornaments and attended by all the members of his retinue, Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Ūṣā, Pratyūṣā and Aruṇa with seven horses. The image in question seems to have been the principal object of worship in a solar shrine. We have, therefore, little doubt that the Sun worship was introduced in Bengal in the pre-Gupta period but it was consolidated on a firm foundation during the Pāla rule in Bengal.

A Sūrya figure (Pl. 6a), a bronze or octo-alloy ('*aṣṭadhātu*') miniature[72] closely corresponds to the Deorā composition in many of its details. However, the main figure of the god is seated, which is usually very rare. He sits cross-legged in a car of one wheel while seven spirited horses are represented underneath the car as drawing it along. There is a prominent girdle round the abdomen of the god. As usual, he holds a pair of lotuses in his two hands. On two sides, sit Piṅgala, with a short beard to right and Daṇḍī to left and Aruṇa is seated behind the *makara*-device of the chariot-head. Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā stand in *ālīḍha* and *pratyālīḍha* at the extreme ends, shooting arrows. No consort is depicted. The Sun god and his two principal attendants are each provided with separate halos behind their heads. The axle and the two wheels of the chariot are fitted quite realistically. The two full-blown lotuses held by their stalks and the jewellery including the prominent girdle round the abdomen retains the touch of the master hand behind the sculpture. The miniature image of the god is undoubtedly a remarkable specimen of the East Indiana art of the seventh-eighth century A.D.[73] S.K. Saraswati[74] assigns it to the seventh century A.D. The Sūrya image with its composite elements of attendants, charioteer, horses etc. represents not a very distant approach to the full fledged stela composition of the Pāla art.[75] The image was originally found along with an inscribed image of *Sarvāṇī* from some ruins in the village of Deulbādī, in the Tippera District, some 22 miles south of Comilla and is now housed in the Bangladesh National Museum.

The unique terracotta Sūrya[76] (21" ht.) from Bogra district in the Mahasthan Museum, Bangladesh is a remarkable piece (Pl. 8a) of sculptural art of the Gupta period from Bengal. The image shows the god completely in round with a plain circular halo behind the head. He wears a flattop *kirīṭamukuṭa, hāra, kuṇḍalas, valayas* and a tunic that covers the body up to the knees and is fastened to the waist by a girdle. The characteristic rolled-scarf goes round the back, the plated ends of which gracefully hang on two sides from the elbows and reaches well below the level of the tunic. High boots cover the legs, the feet being broken at ankles and lost. A sword in the jeweled scabbard is dangling on the left held by a diagonal sword-strap. The lotuses in the hands are gone. No consort or attendant is depicted. As the pedestal is lost, the presence of the horses or the chariot cannot be ascertained.

The sculpture represents the mediaeval type that depicts the Sun god riding on a horse unaccompanied by any attendants. The *'Agni Purāṇa'* (Ch. 51) and the *' Śrī Viśvakarmāvatāra Śāstra'* (Ch. 28) describes it in similar language–*'Athavāsvasāmūrudha kārya ekastu Bhāskara.* In the Sun temple at Konarak (Orissa), such a Sūrya figure known by the name of *Haridāśva* appears in the role of a '*Pārśadevatā*' placed on the outside niche of one of the walls of the main shrine.[77]

The last part of the eighth century A.D betrays a change in iconic perspective of the Sūrya divinity coming over Bengal. Actually, this marks the period of transition between the Gupta and the Pāla times concerning style and composition.

A stray terracotta plaque[78] from Pāhārpur represents a divinity with a halo behind the head, seated cross-legged and holding full-blown lotuses into uplifted hands. The god is identified as the only representation of the Sun god at Pāhārpur. It reminds us of similar representation of the god on the Bodh-Gayā railings. The divinity is shown with the upper garment flying above the shoulders in usual Pāhārpur style. This representation may be reasonably assigned to the early Pāla period, *i.e.* the second half of the eighth century A.D. In the middle and later Pāla period, we find many stone sculptures representing the Sun god, but no seated figure of this type has yet been discovered.

The representation of Sūrya in a niche on a stone slab probably belonging to the eighth century A.D. from Bhadrakālī in the district of Hooghly delineates a significant iconography of the god inspired by *dhyāna.*[79] Here the divinity appears in full anthropomorphic form ignoring the prescribed rule contained in the *Matsya Purāṇa.* However, the peculiarity of this sculpture lies in its emphasis on flatness distantly echoing the two-dimensional art of Bharhut. Another feature of this sculpture not very uncommon in Pāla sculptures is the representation of the deity within a shrine. The niche has two pilasters surmounted by square capitals on both sides. It is ultimately crowned by a pyramidal lintel terminating with architectural shape in the upper end. It is minutely decorated with architectural designs and minor niches within itself shaped as *caitya* windows often with peering human heads or otherwise containing a lotus. Such appearance of the so-called *caitya* windows leads us further to the conclusion that this sculptured piece might have taken shape in the beginning of the Pāla age, as far as we know that the Pāla kings were ardent patrons of Buddhism. The main niche containing the Sūrya image with its pilaster motifs and the minutely decorated lintel will represent a celestial mansion or palace as if visualizing the concept of a *vimāna.* Again, there is considerable absence of decoration in the composition except the crowning lintel, which recalls the language of the Gupta art and which lingered over decades. Sūrya is represented as wearing a pair of pointed boots, as it will be seen about the sculptures of the Sun god appertaining to Pāla Bengal. Daṇḍa and Piṅgala also wear similar footwear worn by the main divinity and helmets of characteristic form. However, the helmet or crown of the main divinity was going to maintain its dimensional beauty of *kirīṭamukuṭa* as it is seen in the Sūrya image belonging to circa seventh century A.D. In this eighth century image from Bhadrakālī, we find that the chariot and horses along with the charioteer Aruṇa vanish from the scene though the symbolic suggestion may still be there. The god holds a lotus in each hand; the petals of the lotus facing the viewer are open while those of the upraised flower are closed. This is a rare image with its unrecognizable face, which marks the end of the Gupta style as well as the beginning of the Pāla convention.

The stage next to that of the Kashipur and Deorā image in the development of the Sūrya motif is very beautifully illustrated by a remarkable sculpture[80] of early Pāla art in the collection of the South Kensington Museum, London. All the attendants are grouped on either side of his figure, almost in a line. The arrow-shooting figures of Ūṣā and Partyūṣā shown just above their head. Unlike the Deorā and Kashipur sculptures, all the figures are shown standing out of the chariot pedestal with their legs heavily booted. However, the treatment of the lotus bunch in the hands of the Sun god as well as of the long sword attached by a strap to his left side distinctly reminds us of the two specimens noticed above.

If a comparison is made between the group of sculptures (Deorā, Kashipur and South Kensington images) with the four Sūrya reliefs, one each from Bihar, west, north and east Bengal reproduced in plate LIX of R.D. Banerjee's 'Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture', we can clearly trace the process of the further development of the iconic type. The two sculptures from Bihar and north Bengal are undoubtedly earlier than the two others from east and west Bengal are and they possess some peculiarities of the older group of Sūrya reliefs. The treatment of the broad sword hanging on the left side of Sūrya, the parabolic '*prabhāvalī*' of the two compositions, the *'kulaḥ'* caps on the heads of Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, absence of any elaborate decoration, the separate '*prabhā*'-s (halos) of the Rajshāhi Museum figure (R.M., No. Fa 5/176) and the absence of the two queens in the Bihar one (Indian Museum, No. 3924) — all these features prove that they belong to the early or middle Pāla period.[81]

The profuse ornamentation of the reliefs from Western Bengal (IMC No. Ms. 8) and eastern Bengal (Dacca district), their pointed stela with the '*kīrttimukha*' design on the top centre (absent in the earlier group), the arrangement in several parallel layers of the companions (shown in different sizes) of the Sun god, the Indianised crowns ('*karaṇḍamukuṭas*') of Daṇḍī and Piṅgala definitely date them in the late or early Sena period. These two Sūrya figures are characteristically representative of the fully developed type of such icons in Bengal, and many of the Sun images in the collection of the different local museums and those of eastern India conform to them in a greater or a lesser degree.[82]

An eleventh century A.D. image of Sūrya from Koṭālipārā (Faridpur)[83] characteristically represents the fully developed type of such icons in Bengal. The image stands in *samapādasthānaka* pose on a full-blown lotus. The lotus issues from *agni-kuṇḍas* on a low pedestal of the *saptaratha* type, which is carved on its face with the figures of seven horses. He is accompanied by Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, standing like Sūrya on lotus-flowers issuing from *agni-kuṇḍas* and holding their usual attributes. *Mahāśvetā* is standing on the lotus in front at the foot of Sūrya, with the right hand in the *abhayamudrā* and the left hand in the *varadamudrā*; below it, is the seated figure of Aruṇa. In front of both, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala stand on the same lotus pedestal. Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā are represented in the same gestures as found with *Mahāśvetā.* There are some additional iconographic features like the swan above the middle horse with its neck being clasped by Aruṇa, the *vanamālā* and a cord tied in the middle of the chest into knots like a *channavīra* in place of the sacred thread. Three kneeling devotees are also carved on the portion of the pedestal in the centre. The whole slab, from the foot to the crown, represents the aureole; its edges emit flames. There is an umbrella at the apex; below it and on either side is seen the flying *gandharvas,* each carrying a garland along with consorts with folded hands.

The image of the Sun god in the developed form appears in a black stone sculpture[84] from Sukhabaspur, Munsiganj, Dacca (Pl. 19a). The god stands erect in his car against a throne background. He holds two lotuses in his two hands, which rise a little above his shoulders. His cloth descends down to the knee and a second piece of cloth is flatly hung in his front. The girdle, which holds his cloth tight round the waist is profusely ornamented and is further, decorated with artistic hangings. Two daggers are attached to the girdle on the two sides. The breast is protected by armor; the outlines of which intertwine to form a knot on the breast. The god wears elaborate necklaces and earrings and an artistically worked coronet bedecks his head. The leg of the god is covered by high footwear, the upper fringes of which are artistically carved.

Bearded, pot-bellied Piṅgala also in top boots stands on the right side of the god with pen and inkstand in his hands. Youthful Daṇḍī, who is also shown in armour and top boots, stands to the left with a sword in his right hand and with the left resting on a staff. The two wives of Sūrya, *viz. Sureṇu* (Saṁjñā) and *Nikṣubhā,* stand respectively on the left and the right side of the god. The goddess *Mahāśvetā* in miniature is placed in front of the Sun god. The two female archers shooting arrows are also shown to the right and the left of Piṅgala and Daṇḍī. The half-bird Aruṇa is driving Sun's chariot of one wheel and seven horses. Below Aruṇa is represented the upraised trunk of *makara* (a mythical animal), which Aruṇa holds in his right hand and which evidently is serving him in place of the gathered reins of the seven horses. The image is richly ornamented with *kīrttimukha* sign at the top. The centaur-upon-elephant (*gaja-śārdūla*) design is exhibited on the two perpendicular sides of the piece, while above these are a pair of Vidyādharas.

By the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., there was fairly a tendency in north India to carve Sun images with the features of the god prevalent in Southern India[85] and Bengal could not remain untouched as well. Three Sun images (Pl. 10b) from

Gāzole (Malda)[86] and one from Maṅgalbārīhāṭ (Naogāon, Rajshāhi. Pl. 11a), have the most conspicuous feature of the South Indian Sun-images. The Sun god has no covering or boot on his feet. However, Sūrya images with bare feet in eastern India are extremely rare. Evidently, the sculptor must have followed a South Indian text for these bootless images as the north Indian authorities prescribe deterrent punishment for such violation. Other feature of the Sun god such as lotuses and the seven horses of his chariot obviously follow the north Indian tradition. These examples, too, show the attempts to bring the synthesis of the two different traditions of the carving of the Sūrya reliefs prevalent in the north and south of the country. The cause of the difference between the characteristics of the Sun reliefs prevailing in northern and southern India was mainly regional. The factor of time and place was mainly responsible for their distinction.[87] The same conclusion can be drawn from the *Sāmba* and the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, which give minute details about the carving of the Sūrya images. The carving of the feet, even of its fingers and nails is also prescribed and their respective measurements are given in detail. It may be interesting to note that both these texts belong to northern India.

As is well known, most of the images of Sūrya are endowed with booted legs according to the accepted north Indian tradition. But, a few images without the depiction of footwear are not unknown. These images have been discovered from Bengal, where the influence of the southern iconography is unmistakable.

A specimen, discovered from Gāzole[88] (Malda district) and dated in the eleventh century A. D., shows the god as standing in *samapādasthānaka* pose on a lotus-pedestal and holding the stalks of lotus in his two upraised hands. The attendant couples, respectively to the proper right and proper left sides, are placed on a halo of low relief. Miniature figure of *Mahāśvetā* and Aruṇa are present. The most striking feature is that neither the Sun god nor his attendants (Aruṇa, Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Saṁjñā, Chāyā, Mahāśvetā) wear any boots. In other respects, the image bears resemblance to those wearing boots.

A unique bare-footed copper Sūrya[89] has been discovered from Maṅgalbārī, Dhamoirhāṭ, Naogāon (Rajshāhi). The deity is four-armed and seated in *sukhāsana* on a lotus on a raised platform placed on the chariot. In his upper two hands, he holds two lotuses by the stalk, while the lower right and left hands show the *varada* and *abhayamudrā* respectively. Aruṇa sits behind the god, holding the reins of the seven horses carved below the lotus throne. Sūrya is clad in a *dhoti* and a double-stringed *upavīta*. His ornaments consist of earrings, necklace and bangles. His legs are bare and not covered by boots.

The *Dvādaśādityas* also came to be worshipped as component parts of the solar religion.[90] Representation of eleven other Ādityas along with the main deity became a feature of the Sun image in the tenth-eleventh century A.D. The iconographical traits of these may be seen in brief. All *Dvādaśādityas* have been given four hands [91] while the *Viśvakarmāśāstra*[92] gives only two hands to Pūṣan and Viṣṇu. However, in actual sculptural representation, variance may be noticed. The images of the *Ādityas* are shown either on the sides of the Sūrya (usually set up behind the image of the

Sun god), or eleven of them are carved on the *prabhāvalī* of the Sūrya image, thus bringing the entire number to twelve. The worship of the twelve *Āditya*s separately was not much in vogue.

Quite a number of images,[93] almost all from East Bengal, portray the god (Pl. 11b) accompanied by eleven Ādityas, Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, three consorts, Aruṇa and the seven horses, though with minor differences among them. The Sūrya image from Pākilāra (Comilla)[94] of a later phase of the Pāla art represents the eleven *Ādityas* in miniature as standing in the background (Pl. 13a). In the black stone image[95] collected from the village of Kulkudi (Gosānihāṭ, Faridpur) in the BNM (no.60) (originally discovered in the Sandwip Island of the Noakhali district), the eleven Ādityas are represented in miniature on either side within circles of foliage (Pl. 12b). Six of them are placed on the proper left and the remaining five of them are on the right. In addition to eleven *Ādityas*, some other Brāhmaṇical deities are also often shown in the Sūrya image. In an excellent image [96] found from the river Gumti in the hamlet of Pākilāra near Mainamati post office, the central deity Sūrya is flanked by Gaṇeśa as well (Pl. 13a). The Kulkudi Sun image depicts a potbellied, 2-armed and bearded standing figure holding a lotus-stalk in the right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* in the left. This figure has been identified as Agni.[97] No consort is depicted in the stone image from east Bengal[98] in the BNM (No.79). Daṇḍī is represented without any sword in a fine image of the Sun god found at Rājair (Faridpur)[99] while the Sun image from Pākilāra depicts him with a sword in hand instead of a club. Most of the images show two arrow-shooting females, while two images represent four, two being on horse back.[100] In the stone image from East Bengal[101] (BNM No. 79), on either side of the god are represented four arrow-shooting females, two of whom are on the horseback and placed below the *Āditya*s. The Kulkudi Sun image represents two equestrians below the sixth circle on either side, shooting the rays of the Sun in the form of shafts to the farthest regions of the universe. In a few of these specimens, the special scarf with floral designs passes by the front and looks like the *vanamālā* of Viṣṇu. In addition, in the same images the short *yajñopavīta* is unusually carved on the *kañcuka* or coat of mail covering the upper body. In the image from Rājair (Faridpur), the exquisitely carved *kañcuka* clings to the body of the god like a piece of finely embroidered muslin. The images from Vikrampur (Dacca)[102] as well as from the river Gumti in the village of Pākilāra are depicted with the umbrella sign at the top[103] while the Pākilāra Sūrya image represents the *kīrttimukha* above in the place of the parasol. The Kulkudi image bears a short inscription of the 12th year of the reign of King Govindacandra (1032 A.D.) of the Candra dynasty of east Bengal. Here the Sun god has been invoked as the 'maker of the day and the god of the persons afflicted with the *takman* (skin-diseases).[104] The figures of twelve *Ādityas* are also reported to have been discovered at Tribeṇī, District Hooghly.[105]

Representation of the other eight *grahas* along with the main deity also became a feature of the Sun-image in the tenth-eleventh century A.D. The images of the *grahas* are shown either on the sides of the Sūrya or on the *prabhāvalī* of the Sūrya image, thus bringing the entire number to nine.

Four images,[106] all from the southwestern Bengal, represent the deity accompanied by the eight Grahas, four on either side (Pl. 14b). Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, Aruṇa, the seven horses and the two arrow-shooting females are present but no consort is depicted, probably because of emphatic focus on the *graha* aspect of Sūrya. However, in one image of this category from Vikrampur (Dhaka) two consorts are depicted as well (Pl. 15a).

The Sun worshippers of ancient Bengal, no doubt, preferred to see their god in standing posture but they were not very averse to the seated posture of the deity as well. An inscribed black stone image[107] of the Sun god (Pl. 16a) hailing from Bairhaṭṭā (Dinajpur) and belonging to the twelfth century A. D. is interesting because it contains some novelties not present in the other group. It is a seated variety, which is comparatively rare. The pedestal inscription calls the god 'Sūrya' and describes him as 'remover of all diseases' (*'samasta-rogāṇāṁ harttā'*). The deity is seated in '*padmāsana*' in a chariot drawn by seven horses, with flames issuing from his head and torso. He holds the lotus flowers in his hands (broken) as usual. Covering of the body and the legs has been faintly suggested. The god is accompanied by Piṅgala, Daṇḍī and three consorts; all are seated, the upper half of *Mahāśvetā* being broken. He is also flanked on two sides by the two arrow-shooting females. Miniature figures of the eight other *Grahas* are also seated on the *prabhāvalī,* four on either side of the central deity. There are, on each side, an arrow and a crescent with a ball on it supported by a shaft. The sculpture is a bit heavy and crude in its style and execution.

Sun Images with other Brāhmanical Deities

The image from Banshihari (W. Dinajpur)[108] in the SAGC shows the miniature figures of Viṣṇu and Gaṇeśa on the left side of the *prabhāvalī* and two defaced figures on the right (Pl. 13b). The deity riding a seven-horsed chariot is also usually attended by Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, Aruṇa, two arrow- shooting females and two consorts on either side.

Two identical images[109] from Vikrampur (Dhaka) show the god in the company of Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, three consorts, Aruṇa and the seven horses as usual. However, on the top of the *prabhāvalī* are seated Brahmā, Maheśvara and Viṣṇu (Pl. 14a). The Triad is flanked by the *Aṣṭadikapālas*[110] with their respective mounts, four on each side. On the two edges of the lower part of the slab are the *Aṣṭanāgas*[111] in *añjali,* four on each side, with their half human and half snake-bodies *(sarpa-pucchākṣti).* The inspiration for these two images might have come from the *Agni Purāṇa* (51).

The unique black stone image[112] (Pl. 20a) of the Sun deity worshipped in the house of the Gosvamis at Sonarang (Tangibadi, Dacca) is the most elaborate image of the Sun god in the eastern districts of Bengal, nay, in the whole of Bengal. The god is accompanied as usual by Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, Aruṇa, seven horses, three consorts and two arrow-shooting females. Except the *kīrttimukha* at the top of the *prabhāvalī* and the figures of the two flying *Vidyādharas* on either side of the head of the god, there is not a single other redundant detail over the whole sculpture. However, the number of miniature figures that crowd the piece makes up the want of decorative details. Below the *kīrttimukha* are shown the eleven *Ādityas* in addition to the present central deity. Over the elaborate halo around the head of the god are six seated cross-legged two-armed male figures. These figures possibly represent the *Saptarṣi-maṇḍala, i.e.* the combination of seven Ṛṣis including the central figure who iṣ no other than Maricī and the other *Ṛṣis* being Atri, Aṅgirā, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vaśiṣṭha.[113]

Then on the right side of the *prabhāvalī* are the eight planets, twelve zodiacal signs and miniature figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa. To the left of the god, seven female figures are sitting cross-legged, one above the other, and two more closer to the Sun god, each one of them making various gestures by her two hands. Bhattashali allegedly took seven of them as representing the Seven Mothers *(Sapta mātṛkā)*. Mlle de Mallmann thinks that they are the nine *Śaktis* namely *Dīptā, Sūkṣmā, Jayā, Bhadrā, Vibhūti, Vimalā, Amoghā, Vidyutā* and *Sarvatomukhī* who are mentioned in connection with Sun worship in the *Iśānaśiva-gurudevapaddhati*[114] and this seems to be more logical.

III

Syncretic Images of the Sun God

On literary[115] as well as archaeological[116] evidences, it may be demonstrated that there has been occasional identifications of Sūrya with Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu and also with Buddha. The *Pañcāyatana pūjā* marks the climax of this trend. Clear connection of the individual members of the triad with the Sun god is demonstrated by several interesting image types of composite character that have been found in Bengal. These are mostly medieval in point of date and emphasize the absorption of the other cult deities in the Sun. We can refer now a few medieval sculpture of composite character.

A beautiful stone Sūrya of the eleventh century A.D.[117] from Mahendra, Kushmandi (West Dinajpur), and now preserved in the collection of the Varendra Research Museum, presents an entirely new iconographic type of the divinity (Pl. 20b). The image agrees with the usual two-armed standing Sūrya figures of the eleventh century A.D., as far as the attending figures are concerned. However, its prominent difference from them lies in the number of its hands. Four armed standing and seated Sūrya images, though rare, are known from parts of central and eastern India; but this one is endowed with six hands. His natural hands hold the two full-blossomed lotuses as usual, while the four additional hands show the *varadamudrā* (with lotus mark on the palm) and rosary (*akṣamālā)* on the right and *abhayamudrā* (with *padmāṅka)* and water pot (*kamaṇḍalu)* on the left. The pointed slab with the *saptaratha* pedestal contains at the base the figures of the seven horses, drawing the Sun god's chariot. The god is represented in *udīcyaveśa,* standing with his customary attendants. The head of the god is framed by a nimbus and the back slab, with a decorative pillar-like upright on each side, is sparsely ornamented. At the apex of the stele is a *kīrttimukha,* spewing rosettes and creepers between *Vidyādhara* couples in the midst of cloud motif.

The nearest textual approximation to this type is the description given of Dhātrī, the first in the list of the *Dvādaśādityas* in the *Viśvakarmāvatāra Śāstra* as quoted by T. A. Gopinatha Rao.[117] The Dhātrī aspect of the Sun god holds lotuses in its two natural hands, a lotus garland (or a fillet of lotus seeds) in its (back) right hand, and a water-vessel in its (back) left *(Dakṣiṇe pauṣkarī mālā kare vāme kamaṇḍaluḥ padmāvyāṁ śobhitakarā sā dhātrī pratjamā smṛtā)*. However, the increased number of its hands, its solar features and rosary and water-vessel (two of the well-known emblems of Brahmā) in two of its hands bring it in line with the groups of syncretistic icons being noticed here. This image may be regarded as a composite representation of Brahmā and Sūrya.[119] Iconographically, it may be compared with the three-headed and eight-armed Chidambaram figure, probably combining in Sūrya the members of the orthodox Brāhmaṇical triad, according to H. Krishna Sastri[120] or with the so-called Trimurtis found in Bundelkhand region.[121] S.K. Saraswati tentatively identified the six-armed image with the four-armed Dhātrī, which is not quite satisfactory.[122] Dhātrī is, no doubt, one of the Ādityas, but Dhātā or Vidhātā is also one of the synonyms of *Brahmā Prajāpati*, and both these characters appear to be symbolized in this interesting sculpture.

A unique three-headed and ten-armed sculpture (Pl. 21a) datable in the twelfth century A.D. has been discovered from the neighborhood of Manda (Rajshāhi).[123] It is preserved in Rajshāhi Museum in Bangladesh. Carved partly in the round, the deity stands *samapādasthānaka*. Of the three faces, the central one has a serene expression, but the right face is distinguished by its horrible appearance (*ghora*) with beard, three eyes, open mouth and protruding teeth. The face on the left side is also three-eyed. All the three heads have the *jaṭāmukuṭa*. The two-eyed placid face resembles that of Sūrya, but the side faces, three-eyed, bearded and mustached, are like those of *Bhairava*.

From the broken off stumps, the image appears to have been originally twelve-armed. Only six hands, three on each side at the back, have survived intact. Its front two pairs of hands are broken, but two full-blown lotuses with stalks are visible in the uppermost pair of hands. The three hands, which are intact on the right side, carry respectively from the top *śakti* (spear) *triśūla* (trident) and *khaṭvāṅga* (staff with a skull). The corresponding attributes in the three left hands are *nīlotpala* (blue lotus), *ḍamaru* (drum) and *sarpa* (snake). These are all characteristic attributes of Śiva, and thus the Śaivite character of the image is quite evident. On the screen behind the main image is depicted a mass of high flames issuing from heads and shoulders, which suggests its association with the *Bhairava* aspect of this god.

The back slab is pointed at the top and the base of the *saptaratha* pedestal is carved with the figures of seven horses. Above the horse in the middle, inserted within a wheel, is Aruṇa seated on the head of a *makara* between Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā, standing respectively in *pratyālīḍha* and *ālīḍha* and holding bows land arrows. In front of the deity and on his *padmapīṭha*, stands *Mahāśvetā* between his legs, with the customary attributes in her two hands. To the right and left respectively are Rājñī and the pen and inkpot bearer Piṅgala endowed with *jaṭāmukuṭa*, and *Nikṣubhā* and Daṇḍī carrying a sword. The legs of each, excepting those of Aruṇa, arc encased in high boots. All the figures in the group are profusely adorned, and clad in *dhotis*. Over the chariot drawn by seven horses, the god in *dhoti* with raised folds and scarf wears sacred thread, top boots and jewellery. On the top are a *kīrttimukha* and two flying Vidyādharas.

The image does not correspond to any known iconographic text. However, iconographically it conforms, largely, to the *dhyāna-mantra of Mārttaṇḍa* variety of Sūrya as quoted in the *Śāradātilaka Tantra.*[124] This variety of the Sun god is significantly referred to there as *Vallabhārdha*[125] that means, "Half of Śiva (*Bhairava*)," thus pointing to the composite nature of the iconic concept.

K.C. Sarkar[126] tentatively identified the god with the four-faced eight-armed *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava* given in the *sāradātilaka Tantra*[127] and ever since it has been referred to as such. The present image actually may be taken as a four-faced one, the face at the back remaining uncarved. The text prescribes the *khaṭvāṅga, padma, cakra, śakti, pāśa, śṛṇī, akṣamālā* and *kapāla* as attributes in hands and requires all the four faces to be three eyed. Mlle de Mallmann drew our attention to two descriptions of a syncretic image of Sūrya and Śiva, one from the *Agni Purāṇa* and the other from the *Matsya Purāṇa,* both with four faces and eight arms but differing from the *Śāradātilaka Tantra* descriptions of attributes in hands.[128] The Bengal image does not follow any of these texts. Nor does it agree with the details of the few similar images discovered from elsewhere in India.[129]

In the Purāṇas, many '*stotras*' are mentioned identifying Śiva with Sūrya.[130] In one entire chapter (73rd) of the *Agni Purāṇa,* elaborate description has been given about the rituals of Sun worship. It is stated there that the worship of the Sun god should be performed by the recital of a *mantra,* named *Saṁhāriṇī*, in which Śiva has been identified with Sun.[131]

In fact, this kind of worship of the Sun started because of the growing Tāntricism, which was spreading fast everywhere in the country, especially in eastern India in the early medieval period. In the *Bṛhat-tantrasāra* of the celebrated Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgiśa, there is a section on '*Sūryamantra*' where we come across the identifications of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva with Sun god.[132] There is hardly any doubt, however, that Sun worship in its Tāntric form laid particular emphasis on the identity of the Sun with Śiva. The concept of the identity of the Sun with Śiva was not confined merely to the early medieval period, but it continued in the subsequent centuries. The *Sūryamaṅgala Pāñcālī* composed in the late medieval period refers to God Sūrya alias Śiva adorned with *dhutura* flowers is taking stamonium and his companions are sixteen hundred *gopī*. Thus, both the deities Sūrya and Śiva stood for fertility symbol and agriculture and identical. It has been sought to explain in the backdrop of Surya image inscription *"Om Svasti śrī-Śiva-devādityaḥ".*[133] Most probably, this attitude led to the development of the concept of the composite deity, *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava* whose description, as is well-known, finds a prominent place in the *Sāradā-tilakatantra.*[134] In the *Kālikā Purāṇa* also, Sūrya has been referred, at least once, as *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava.*[135] Therefore, the identification of Śiva and Sūrya in the *Saṁhāriṇī mantra* of the *Agni Purāṇa* and the figure of *Mārttaṇḍa-Bhairava* clearly indicate the Tāntric influence on Sun worship.

A black chlorite sculpture[136] (26.7 x 19 cm) of unrecorded provenance depicts the Sun god as four-armed, nimbate and seated cross-legged in *padmāsana* (Pl. 21b). Aruṇa is similarly seated in front on a chariot, which is being drawn to left by seven horses carved in profile and placed upon a low platform. In his upper hands, the god carries a pair of lotuses. The lower right and left hands hold the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* respectively. The god has the bare feet in front of which is seated *Mahāśvetā*. The ornaments worn by the god are plain and not engraved and his headgear is a low *kirīṭa*. The example appears to be a syncretic icon, combining the elements of Sūrya with those of Viṣṇu. It may be added that the combination of Sūrya with Viṣṇu most probably led to the depiction of Sūrya without shoes, possibly keeping in view of easy acceptability of the devotees of both the cult-gods.

Apart from Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, reconciliation and rapprochement between rival gods and their creeds is also traceable from the direct association of Bodhisattva Lokeśvara with other Hindu cult divinities including the Sun god.

A fragmentary (only the head and upper part of the torso with multiple arms, some intact and others broken, are preserved) relief[137] of medieval Bengal is said to be a striking combination of Sūrya and Lokeśvara (Pl. 22a). Of the ten arms, six are gone. Of the remaining four hands, a pair of right and left hands holds two full-blown lotuses. The other pair holds the *akṣamālā* and an indistinct object. The god has one head with the *jaṭāmukuṭa*. There is a seated figure of the two-armed *Dhyānī-Buddha Amitābha* in miniature on the crest of the image. J.N. Banerjea tentatively identified the image as a combined representation of Sūrya and Lokeśvara.[138] However, the *jaṭāmukuṭa* as the headgear and *akṣamālā* in one of the hands of the deity deserve a much deeper dig for a more satisfactory identification. Both these iconographic elements are connected with the god Brahmā, a fact that may tempt us to trace in this image the combination of Sūrya with the former. However, it is very difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion in view of the loss of the attributes in other six hands. Anyway, if the identification of the sculpture as *Sūrya-Lokeśvara* has to be accepted, it would be better to find in it the amalgamation of Sūrya and *Jaṭāmukuṭa-Lokeśvara*. In this connection, it may be mentioned that one of the main forms of the Buddhist *Avalokiteśvara-Lokanātha* in Bengal was *Siṁhanāda-Lokeśvara*, the healer of leprosy[139] who took the form and features of Sūrya.

IV

Navagraha Worship

The worship of the *Navagrahas* was much in vogue in early Bengal. Yājñavalkya lays down certain details about the images of the *Grahas*. He says that the figures of Sūrya, *Soma* (Moon), the son of the Earth *Maṅgala* (Mars), the son of the *Soma Budha* (Mercury), *Bṛhaspati* (Jupiter), *Śukra* (Venus), *Śani* (Saturn), *Rāhu* and *Ketu* should be made of copper crystal, red sandal (wood), gold (in the case of *Budha* and *Bṛhaspati*), silver, iron, lead and bell-metal respectively. Their figures were also to be drawn on canvas in their respective colour or in *maṇḍalas* made of scented paste (sandal-wood-paste). Besides *Yājñavalkya-Smṛti*, many other works namely the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, Aṁśumadbhedāgama, Śilparatna*, and *Rūpamaṇḍana* etc. give different descriptions about their forms.

The iconographical representation of *Navagrahas* does not seem to follow canonical texts. If we compare a number of texts from the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa, Śilparatna, Mānosollāsa, Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇam, Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati, Rūpamaṇḍana,* and *Nispaṇṇayogāvālī* etc. with some extant sculptures many of which were found from Bengal,[140] it will be noticed that the latter not only depart from the former in most cases but also differ in some respects among themselves as well. According to these texts, the individual *Grahas* could be two-armed or four-armed and they could be with or without mounts. The attributes in hands and the nature of mounts could also vary. However, the list of the divinities in all these sources consisted of the stereotyped nine *Grahas*, namely, *Ravi* (Sun), *Soma, Maṅgala, Budha, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Śaṇi, Rāhu* and *Ketu* (the ascending and descending nodes of the moon), albeit occasionally with various synonyms. Except the first two and the last two of the names, the remaining ones are all planets.

Separate representations of any particular one of the nine planets are extremely rare. To date we know of only two, which are on two of the plaques of the plinth of the Pāhārpur temple: one is of the *Candra* and the other is of *Bṛhaspati*. Debala Mitra noticed[141] that the *Graha* images of Bengal and Bihar considerably accorded with the *Agni Purāṇa* in respect of attributes but she assigned the wide disagreements with regard to the mounts to different sources of inspirations.

Most of the *Navagraha* images show the *Navagrahas* in panels where the divinities are placed in a particular order. Over a dozen of them depict Gaṇeśa accompanying the planets, placed at the beginning of the row. This peculiarity is seen in the Bengal sculptures alone. It is quite natural that the introduction of Gaṇeśa, who as *Vighnāntaka* wields power of putting obstacles and removing them, into the group, was to strengthen the corporate cult to avert evils and obtain success. However, the iconographic texts seem to be silent about this alliance of the *Grahas* with Gaṇeśa, against the fact that the latter was specifically directed to accompany the group of the *Māṅka ās*.

An excellent specimen of the eleventh century A.D. *Navagraha* slab[142] (17" X 3'3") in black chlorite stone from Kankandighi under the Mathurapur P.S. of the Diamond Harbour sub-division (Khari, 24-Parganas) is a very good representative specimen of the group-presentation (Pl. 23a). In it, the images of the nine planets, as prescribed by the Hindu astrology, with that of Gaṇeśa, are elegantly carved in relief. They are standing in graceful pose in a row on lotus pedestals, with Gaṇeśa at the beginning. Each of the figures has over the head an oval halo with lotus border and a snake-head-like design between them, and wears a sacred thread and a short skirt tied round the waist by a girdle. Their other peculiarities from the left are noted below.

1. Gaṇeśa stands in *ābhaṅga* pose, wears a *jaṭāmukuṭa,* a pair of bracelets of beads, and holds in his right hand a rosary and in his left a battle-axe.
2. *Ravi* stands in *samabhaṅga* attitude, wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa,* a necklace, a pair of bracelets and a *vanamālā* hanging up to the knees, and holds, as usual, in his either hand a lotus stalk terminating in two lotuses, just above the shoulders.
3. *Soma* stands in *ābhaṅga* attitude, wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa,* a necklace, a pair of bracelets, a pair of armlets and holds a rosary in the right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* in the left.
4. *Maṅgala* stands in the same pose as the above image, wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa* and other ornaments like the image of the moon and holds a rosary in the right hand and a spear in the left.
5. *Budha* stands in *tribhaṅga* attitude with his left leg half bent, wears a peculiar headdress and other ornaments as in the above two images and holds with his two hands an arrow. Along the left side is a big bow, placed on his shoulder, extending up to his feet.
6. *Bṛhaspati,* a pot-bellied figure with long beard, stands in *ābhaṅga* pose, wears a *jaṭāmukuṭa* and other ornaments like *Budha,* and holds a rosary in the right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* in the left.
7. *Śukra* stands in *ābhaṅga* attitude, wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa* and other ornaments as in the above images, and holds in his right hand a rosary and in the left a *kamaṇḍalu.*
8. *Śaṇi* stands in a peculiar attitude, owing to his paralytic affection caused by a curse, wears a *kirīṭamukuṭa* and other ornaments like *Śukra,* and holds a rosary in his right hand and a staff his left.
9. *Rāhu,* the big-mouthed figure has only the upper part of a human body. He is seated on a chariot, and wears a headdress like modern tiara and other ornaments as in the above images, has a pair of big moustaches, and holds with his two hands an unfolded book. He has a small eye on the forehead and a hood of snakes over the *mukuṭa.*
10. *Ketu* is in a human figure, in *ābhaṅga* attitude with the lower part like a serpent tail. He wears a *mukuṭa*-like tiara and other ornaments as in the body of *Rāhu,* has a hood of snakeheads over the *mukuṭa,* and holds a sword in his right hand and a shield in his left.

Below the lotus, on which the above images of the planets stand are carved in low relief, the stems and leaves of the lotus plant in scrolls, with the main stem in the centre and the *vāhanas* (mounts) of the planets within and below them. Among the *vāhanas,* the following are from the left, within the stems and leaves of the lotus plant: A lion, swan, boar, deer, elephant, jackal, buffalo, fish, vulture, and the following are beneath them: a mouse, horse, ram, peacock, dog, swan, frog, ass and chariot. Over the halos of the images of the planets, there is a border in relief with three decorative designs, one in the centre and two on the two sides like *Makara* heads, placed back to back. Upon that, on the upper and on a portion of the side edges or the slab are depicted flames of fire. The beautifully designed long rectangular slab with the main figures inset in very high relief, seems to show that the whole composition was itself an 'object for regular worship in times of *graha-yāga* and not a 'door-piece' (Pl. 23a).[143] Similar *Navagraha* panels (but without the stems and lotus plant in scrolls in the pedestal) have been discovered in the districts of West Dinajpur,[144] Rajshāhi,[145] Māldā,[146] and Birbhum[147] Those from Rajshāhi and Madnabati are dated in the eleventh and twelfth century respectively.

In one panel from north Bengal in the AMC,[148] very unusually Gaṇeśa and the *Grahas* begin their order from the proper left. The panel[149] from Akhilya (Rajshāhi) in the BNM (No. 67.41) shows additional miniature figures of the Hindu Triad and eight other divinities, probably the *Dikpālas*, on the upper part of the slab (Pl. 24b). One fragmentary panel in the SAGC[150] shows Gaṇeśa, Ravi and Soma, but the *vāhanas* are not represented.

A few panels[151] show the *Navagrahas* standing without the presence of Gaṇeśa or the *vāhanas* (Pl. 24a). Two other fragments[152] may belong to this type, which does not show the *vāhanas*, and the Gaṇeśa-ends are broken. One of these last two specimens (the sandstone panel in the BNM) appears to be of late Gupta period and nearer in date to the IMC fragmentary specimen from Sārnāth.[153]

In most of the *Navagraha* slabs hitherto discovered, all the images of the planets are found standing side by side, though there are a few where they are depicted in seated postures. The sandstone panel in the SAGC[154] broken into two pieces, seemed to be a door lintel from some shrine. It shows the Navagrahas in seated position as in the case of the most of the *Graha*-panels from Orissa. Gaṇeśa is absent and no *vāhana* is represented.

The separate and detached figures of the *Navagrahas* are very rare throughout India with the exception of the Sun god. The reason may be attributed to the fact that they were not independently worshipped, as even now the Hindus do not worship separately under the belief that this may offend the other planets. As already noted, only two detached images of the planets have been discovered until now from Bengal. These are Nos. 60 and 61 on the basement of the Pāhārpur temple and belong to the seventh or eighth Century A.D., the period of the second group of the stone reliefs at Pāhārpur.

On the western wall of the main shrine at Pāhārpur is depicted a male[155] who is standing quite erect between two plantain trees and holding a water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*) in the left hand, which hangs down, and a rosary (*akṣamālā*) in the right that is raised up. He wears a '*jaṭāmukuṭa*,' very artistically arranged, and no ornaments at all; a prominent crescent (*ardhacandra, indukalā*) mark appears over the crown of matted locks. The only god wearing a crescent on the head is the god Śiva and on this ground only R.D. Banerji described the image as 'Śiva conceived as *Somanātha*, the lord of the moon'[156] and K.N. Dikshit too described it as that of *Śiva-Candraśekhara*.[157]

However, S.K. Saraswati pointed out the absence of two of Śiva's invariable cognizance such as the *ūrdhvaliṅga* ('penis erectus') and the third eye vertically placed on his forehead. He referred to a *dhyāna* in the *Agni Purāṇa*[158] and correctly identified the image as that of *Candra* (moon-god), the second planet.[159]

Next to the image of Candra at Pāhārpur, there is another sculpture[155] on the western wall. It represents a slightly pot-bellied, two-armed, male figure standing erect on a plain *triratha* pedestal with a kneeling devotee with folded hands to his right, wearing a '*jaṭāmukuṭa*' and the dress of a Brāhmaṇical sage. He has two hands; in the left, raised to shoulders, he holds a manuscript *(pustaka)* and the right, disposed in *varada,* exhibits a rosary *(akṣamālā)*. His hair is carefully arranged upward with a knot in the middle. He wears a scarf or a skin, tied to the waist by string girdle, and an *uttarīya* is seen covering a part of the body. No ornaments bedeck his person. A devotee kneels on the right in *añjali.* Two trees, perhaps plantain trees, appear on two sides in the background and an arch with the facade decorated with lotus rosettes is seen above his head.

Both R.D. Banerji[161] and K.N. Dikshit[162] described it as a representation of the god Brahmā. It seems that the manuscript and the rosary as attributes were responsible for such description. It was S.K. Saraswati again who, in the absence of additional faces and hands, did not agree to such identification and perhaps correctly identified it as the *Bṛhaspati,* one of the planets, after comparing it with his characterization in the '*Viṣṇudharmottara*'. The text (111,69.3) lays down that '*Bṛhaspati,* the preceptor of the gods, should be made of a complexion like that of molten gold and two-armed, a manuscript and a rosary being placed in his two hands' (*..dvibhujaśca bṛhaspatiḥ pustakaṁcakṣamālāñca karayostasya karayet //*). This description, however, does not tally with the *'Agni Purāṇa'* account of *Bṛhaspati.*

A fragmented black stone icon (100 x 59 cms.) from Kandaran (Malda District) and now in the Malda Museum[163] shows a male figure (Pl. 26b) standing on lotus pedestal in a slight *ābhaṅga* posture. The slightly bent proper left leg comes a bit forward, while the proper left leg kept behind goes up until it meets the beautiful bend near the waist. The proper left hand clings to the waist and carries a *kamaṇḍalu.* Just above the elbow, we find a *keyūra* or armlet. The proper right hand is bent at the elbow with the open palm facing the devotee and a rosary is placed between the palm and the thumb. The figure wears a fine cloth, which covers the region between the knees and the waist. The torso also carries shallow indented lines starting from the proper right and going upwards to the left suggesting *uttarīya.* The waistband of the figure carries floral decorations with a full-blown flower at the centre.

On two sides of the standing figure, we come across pairs of plantain trees. The back-slab of this fragmented figure shows a lotus petal rim and rows of pearl decorations. It is interesting to note that the pedestal of this sculpture shows two full-blown lotuses on two sides, lotus stalks and foliage all in shallow engraved lines. Iconographically, this figure would be identified as that of *Bṛhaspati.* The figure is broken above. On the grounds of modeling and general appearance, this piece seems to be a product of second half of eleventh century.

VI

Images of Revanta[164]

Revanta is one of the sons of Sūrya, some of the others being Yama, the twin Aśvins, Vaivasvata Manu, Sāvarṇi Manu and Śaṇi. According to the Purāṇas, he is the principal son of the Sun god. It appears that people preferred to worship mostly Revanta, the son begotten on Saṁjñā and therefore, he is found depicted more by the sculptors than others are.

The chapter on *Pratimā-lakṣaṇa* in *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* lays down that 'Revanta riding on horse back is (shown) engaged with his companions in the sport of hunting' *('revanto śvārūḍha mṛgayākṛḍādi parivārah')*.[165] The *Viṣṇudharmottara* description is more meager which states that 'the Lord Revanta should be like Sūrya, (and) on the back of a horse' *('pṛṣṭhe śce sūryavatkāryo revantaśca tathā prabhuḥ')*.[166]

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* throw some more light on this deity. According to the former, Revanta delivers people from the natural calamities like the terrors of forests, great conflagrations, apprehended invasion or loot by enemies and robbers and bestows upon his worshippers welfare, riches, happiness, kingdom, health, fame and advancement.[167] *Kālikā Purāṇa*[168] lays down that the image of Revanta should be placed on a white horse with his hair tied up by a cloth. The deity should be dressed in a coat of mail and should carry a sword in his right hand and a whip in the left. It also recommends his worship by kings and says that he should be worshipped in either an image, or a water-vessel, at the gates according to the rites of Sun worship (Ch.V. 49). The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* says, "*Revanto nāma yo- kaṣya rūpeṇarkasamaḥ sutaḥ*".[169] Images of Revanta were previously taken as *Kalki*.[170] It was B.B. Bidyavinod who for the first time made his correct identification. N.K. Bhattashali, N. N. Sanyal and J.N. Banerjea further elaborated on the iconography of him.[171]

The worship of Revanta seems to have been much in vogue in eastern India. Raghunandana quotes a passage from the '*Kalpataru*', which took it from the '*Brahma Purāṇa*', and records the worship of Revanta with pomp and ceremony.[172] A few images of this god have been discovered in Bengal. These images largely agree among themselves. The equestrian deity is invariably two-armed and always surrounded by attendants one of whom holds a parasol over the head of the god. The horse is caparisoned and the legs, armour and ornaments of Revanta are exactly like those of his father. It appears from the better-preserved specimens that the sculptors had different aspects of the god to emphasize upon and the extant images may at least be divided into two types.

As many as nine images representing Revanta have been found in different parts of Bengal. From among these nine images, four are from *Puṇḍravardhana* (three from Dinajpur and one from Malda) and one each from *Rāḍhā* (Birbhum), Vaṅga (Vajrayogini, Dacca), *Samataṭa* (Badkamta, Comilla) and *Candradvīpa* (Chancharipasa, Bakarganj: Pl. 26a).

The earliest sculpture of Revanta in Bengal, dated to the nineth century A.D.

and made of gray sandstone, has been found from Shadea, Dinajpur that once formed a part of ancient *Varendra*. The example[173] agrees in essentials with the Itahar (Dinajpur) image of Revanta detailed below. However, all the accompanying figures except that of the umbrella-bearer are absent. The second image[174] of Revanta (Pl. 25a) belonging to the tenth century A.D. comes from Sonapur, Itahar of the same Dinajpur District. In this relief, Revanta is represented on a richly caparisoned horse. In his right hand, he holds against the chest a drinking-vessel (*pān-pātra*) and the reins (*raśmi)* of the horse in the left. The deity wears a *dhoti* as well as ornaments; his right leg is encased in a high boot while the left is invisible. Under his right leg, a dog is seen running along with the horse that tramples on a boar with the left foreleg. Over his head is a high umbrella held by an attendant from behind, which thus indicates his royal rank. There are also four other attendants, three of them armed, and the fourth holding a cloth bag with his hand dipped into it. In the rounded base there is, between two trees, a frieze of three dancing musicians, a female dancer with her right hand in the *abhayamudrā*, an archer and a boar. The scene obviously depicts a royal hunting (*mṛgayā)* with usual revelries.

The third icon[175] of Revanta (Pl. 25b) carved in black basalt again comes from another area (Ghatnagar) of the Dinajpur District. This eleventh century A.D. sculpture presents him in a very interesting manner. On a double lotus, the booted god rides on horseback with his feet in the stirrups, a whip (*kaṣā)* in his right hand, reins of the horse in his left and a parasol held up by an assistant over his head. A broad-headed sword hangs on his right. The deity is apparently in the midst of two robbers ready to attack him. In front of the god, stands the first robber who has seized the horse by the head and is flourishing a dagger in his right hand. Behind him and his mount is a tree on which is the other robber with a dagger in hand. Just above the head of the horse is represented a dwelling cottage and a couple seated inside. The pedestal shows a seated woman cutting a fish with a fish knife (*baṇṭi*) and behind her is a man with a sword and a shield approaching as if to lay hands on her. In the base are also the figures of a woman in *atibhaṅga* standing on a lotus with an indistinct object in her hand and a kneeling worshipper. Thus, the figure of Revanta in this composition closely conforms to his description in the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (85.46-49), but the surrounding scene differs from the Bihar images, which seem to follow the *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*. The depiction of the peaceful domestic scene as well as perils of life on the same slab was, perhaps, an attempt to delineate the power of the god who, according to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, looks over the safety of his worshippers from the menace of thieves and robbers. Incidentally, it may be noted that the motif of a woman cutting a fish also occurs in the pedestal of the *Hāriti* image housed in the Bangladesh National Museum. In view of this, the above-mentioned female standing in *atibhaṅga* seems to be the representation of Hāriti, wife of Kubera whose attendants are the *Guhyakas*. The confusion about the kingship over the *Guhyakas* between Kubera and Revanta or the urge for prayer to the mother-goddess *Hāriti* who is the patroness as well as the stealer of children, for protection of offspring against danger, might have contributed to such representation.

A black stone idol of the divinity[176] datable to the ten-eleventh century A.D. has been recovered from Badkamta (ancient *Karmānta*) in the present Comilla district (Bangladesh). It represents the hunting episode with more realistic details. To the left of the equestrian booted deity, (seen underneath the belly of the horse) an archer, beside who stands a dog, has shot an arrow that has struck a boar fleeing ahead. Another smaller boar is represented in front of the wounded one. Below Revanta is a man with a sword in his right hand. To his left stands a woman, perhaps his wife, with a frolicsome child at her feet. In the front panel are seven women bearing flowers and fruits, and water in a pitcher. Below them, stand four male attendants, two of them with swords in their hands, the third a club, and the fourth a hawk. The presence of so many men, women and children with *naivedyas* indicates Revanta's role as the protector of people from the terror or natural calamities that involved nearly all sections of the society.

The artists of the Pāla period followed the north Indian tradition in making the images of Revanta in Bihar[177] and Bengal. However, they did not show the god flanked by Daṇḍī and Piṅgala and/or with the *Navagrahas* at the top as found in the early medieval Revanta icons of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Even the artists of Bihar and those of Bengal did not always agree with one another about the details of representation. Contrary to the Revanta images from Bihar that face to the proper right,[178] all the Bengal images face to the proper left. Bihar's stray depictions of a few things such as a lotus in the left hand of the god, *cāmara* and *kalaśa* in the umbrella-bearer's hands and pouring of wine by a female attendant into the cup held by the god[179] are not found in any of the Revanta-images from Bengal. Bengal's uniqueness also lies in representing the god as the protector of his worshippers from the dangers of the thieves and robbers as illustrated in the Ghatnagar image, which happens to be the only sculpture in the whole of India with such a distinctive feature. Frequent danger of armed robbery faced by the people with enormous riches most probably gave impetus for such a representation as laid down in the *Skanda Purāṇa.*[180]

Constant representation of the wild boar as a game in the image of Revanta engaged in the sport of hunting is quite significant.[181] For an equestrian offspring of the mighty Sun god, it would have been natural to go for big game hunting like lion, tiger, etc. Besides, hunting a wild pig was neither theologically sanctified nor would it be in consonance with the concept of *mṛgayā*. On the contrary, a boar symbolism could have been fruitfully appropriated to highlight the boar incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Revanta, therefore, appears to have been addressed to the protection and well-being of his devotees, has had a social statement uttered through the particular animal symbolism. The pig itself is value-neutral except that it is a species of a quadruped genus, but the 'import' as a symbol hints at the particular layer of the social strata, which is subsisting on cultivation and hence craves the indulgence of a protective deity to save the means of subsistence from predators.

VI

Besides Revanta, images of the attendants of Sūrya have also come to be known. However, it is not certain whether they were meant for the purpose of worship.

One bronze image[182] of Piṅgala (Pl. 27a) belonging to the twelfth Century A.D. is found in the Varendra Research Musem, Rajshāhi. The bearded and pot-bellied figure stands in *tribhaṅga* on a double lotus. He holds a pen in its right hand and an inkpot in the left. The figure is clad in a *dhoti,* which is secured around the waist by a cloth band. It also wears an *upavīta* and *uttarīya* His legs are encased in high boots and a scarf is thrown over the two arms. The hair is piled high at the back of the head and secured by a jeweled band decorated with five upright plaques. The ornaments consist of a pair of round earrings, *keyūras* and bangles.

An image[183] of Daṇḍī (Pl. 27b) made of bronze and belonging to the twelfth. century A.D. is also housed in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshāhi. The figure stands in *tribhaṅga* on a double lotus with the palm of right hand bent inwards and supported against the chest by means of a strut. The left hand holds a sword with its point raised upwards. The figure is clad in a *dhoti,* which is secured round the waist by a jeweled band. He wears round earrings, armlets, bangles, a tall crown and a headband. The legs are encased in high boots.

Thus, the solar iconography of early Bengal largely confirms the literary traditions of the solar cult as represented in the Vedic, the Epic and the Paurāṇic records and other Indian texts. Interestingly, no punch-marked nor cast-coins showing Sun-disc on a pedestal have yet been discovered in Bengal. It appears that the iconic representation of Sūrya in ancient Vaṅga preceded its worship in symbolic form as was in vogue in different parts of India. The anthropomorphic representation of the Sun god even in the pre-Gupta period has been visualized in three forms: a celestial winged bird *Garutmān,* a god riding a chariot drawn by horses and the god in tunic and boots under the Magian impact. The concept of Sūrya pillar was probably known to Bengali artists in the third-fourth century A.D. In the innovatory process, later Sun images show slow but steady removal of the northerner's dress with the waist-girdle) and the booted feet being retained in all the cases. However, bare-footed Sūrya was also not unknown. The next stage in the evolution of solar icons was greater amplification and embellishment of the Sun-figure and the depiction of more of his attendants. Neither in the pre-Gupta nor in the Gupta period was Sūrya ever seen as an accessory figure. During the last two or three centuries of the so-called Hindu rule, Sūrya was not only represented as combining with other gods but also shown as an accompanying figure of the major cult-gods.

Notes and References

1. *JISOA,* XVI, p. 51.
2. *Coins of Ancient India,* (Rep.), Varanasi, 1963, p. 43.
3. Allan, J., '*Coins of Ancient India'*; P. Jash, *Coins and Culture of Early North India,* chapter-1, p.11ff., Delhi, 2008.
4. *JISOA,* XVI, p. 53.
5. *CBI,* p. 41.

6. The image from Bankura is now housed in Vangiya Sahitya Parishad, Bisnupur (Bankura).
7. The stone Sūrya image from Gaṅgāsāgar of 24 Parganas, at the Museum of Art, Philadelphia; No.27.9.1; St. Kramarisch, *Indian Sculptures in the Philadelphia Museum of Art,* pp. 90-91, pls. 24, 25
8. The sculpture from Nahapara, (Dhaka) BNM No. 62 shows the god with *karaṇḍamukuṭa,* as laid down by *Aṁśumadbhedāgama* and *Suprabhedāgama.*
9. Malda Mus. Cat. RSR 15, 16, 27.
10. Terracotta, Bogra, MHM no.1138; terracotta, Chandraketugarh, AMC no. T6836; stone, Tithi (Dinajpur), AMC no. 168 and stone, Bengal, in AMC.
11. In the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa,* he is called *Agni* (*IBBS,* p. 164) and in the *Mat. P.,* (VI), *Dhātā* (261.6a).
12. *IBBS,* p.151.
13. *EHI,* 1(2), p. 313; *DHI,* p. 432, 436 etc. *HB-I,* p. 457; *ESB,* pp. 25.
14. East Bengal, BNM no. 79; Rampal (Dhaka), BNM no.68.65; Kulkudi (Faridpur), BNM no. 60.
15. Black stone image from Tithi (Dinajpur); AMC no. 168.
16. *VRS-AR,* 1929-30, p. 10.
17. *IBBS,* pp. 169, 171, 172.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Quoted by N.N. Vasu, *The Archeological Survey of Mayurabhanja,* vol. I, Mayurabhanja State, 1911; *EHI,* vol. I, pt. II, p. 302.
20. *MASI,* no. 55, plates LVII. a, b.
21. Sūrya images from Vikrampur (Dhaka) BNM Nos. 61 and 66.31 and from Daharpara (Faridpur), BSP No.429; *BSP- Cat.,* pp.76-77, pl. XVII.
22. *IA,* 1925, p. 170.
23. The terracotta Sūrya image from Chandraketugarh (24-Parganasas), AMC No. T6838; *IA-Rev.* 1955-56, p. 62, pl. LXXII-b; *Lalit Kalā,* No.6, 1959, p. 46; *ModernReview,* 1956.
24. The stone Sūrya image from Satagovindapur (Dinajpur), BNM No.70.558; *BSHI,* p. 188, pl. 160.
25. *JISOA,* pp. 74-75.
26. *JUPHS.,* 1958, Vol. VI, part II, p. 49.
27. *DHI,* p. 437.
28. *JRAS,* 1917, p. 599.
29. MacDonnell, A.A., 'The development of early Hindu Icons', *JRAS,* 1917, P. 599.
30. *JRAS,* 1918, p. 523.
31. V.P., III, 67. 9b.
32. Basu, P.C., Sakti Kali, *Development of Iconography in Pre-Gupta Vaṅga,* Calcutta, 2004, p.74, fig. 20.
33. *RV,* 1.164.46.
34. Coomaraswami, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art,* Boston, 1927, pl. V. no.16; Agarwal, V. S., *Studies in Indian Art,* Varanasi, 1965, pls. IX, X & XI; Biswas, S.S., *Terracotta Art of Bengal,* Delhi, 1981, p.79, pl. (a).
35. Coomaraswami, *op. cit.,* pl. XII. no. 41, pl. XVI, no. 55.
36. AMC No. T6838; *Indian Archaeology — A Review,* 1955- 56 pl. LXXIIb*; Modern Review,* April, 1956; P.C. Dasgupta, 'Early Terracotta from Candraketugarh', *Lalitkalā* No.6 Oct. 1959, pp. 45-52; Basu, *op. cit.* p. 80.
37. *RV,* 1.115, 3; 7.60.3; 7.63.2.
38. Coomaraswami, *op. cit.,* p.67, fig. 103.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 67, fig. 24.
40. *ASIAR*, III, p. 97.
41. *RV*, I.115.3; X.37.3, 49.7; V.29.5, V.45.9; IV.13.3.
42. Quoted by Cumont, F., *The Mysteries of Mithra*, New York, 1956, p. 2.
43. *DHI*, pp. 256-59.
44. *KKBI*, pp. 45-46, Sl. No. 8; Basu, P.C. *op. cit.*, p. 83.
45. *KKBI*, p. 57. Sl. 51, pl. XLII. Fig.63; Basu, P.C., *op. cit.*, p. 91.
46. *KKBI*, pp. 55-56, Sl. N0. 39, pl. XXXIII, fig. 37A; Basu, P.C., *op. cit.*, p. 87.
47. Gupta, S.M., *Sūrya, the Sun God*, Calcutta, pl. 26.
48. *KKBI*, pp. 45, Sl. No. 8, pl. XIX, fig. 8A; Basu, *op., cit.*, p. 87.
49. Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 88, fig. 23.
50. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 68.
51. *SVRM*, p. 236, pl.232.; *ESB*, p. 12; *AEI*, pp. 11,21,61,97, pl. 13; *DHI*, p. 435; *HB-I*, pp. 521-22.
52. *AR.-VRS.* 1934-35. p.13, fig. 1; *SVRM*, p. 254, pl. 243; *HB-I.* pp. 521-22; *DHI*, p.435; *ESB*, *P.*12, fig. I; *AEI*, pp. 11, 21. pl. 14.
53. J.N. Banerjea wrongly stated the Niyamatpur image to be with bare feet. The high boots reaching just god below the knees are very clear. *Cf. HB-I*, p. 456.
54. *ESB*, pp. 12-13; *HB*-I, p. 521.
55. *DHI*, p. 435; *HB-I*, p. 456.
56. *ESB*, p. 13.
57. *BSHI*, p. 186-187.
58. Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, University of Calcutta, 1942, p. 372.
59. *MRSCB*, p. 275, Pl. *V.* Fig. 2.
60. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 62.
61. *ESB*, p.12; *JISOA*, XVI, pp. 80-81; *SWAI-S*, pp. 303-304.
62. *DHI*, pl. XXVIII, fig. 4.
63. *AR-VRS*, 1926-27. pp. 2-3, fig. I; *ESB*, pp. 21-22, fig- 5; *DHI*, pp. 435.36; *HB-I*, p. 523; *AEI*, pp. 61, 62, 65, 68, pl. 106; *SAB*, pp. 61, 63-64, fig. 6; *SVRM*, pp. 248-249, pl. 241; *SWAI-S*, p. 303.
64. *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p.313, pl. LXXXVIII, fig. 2.
65. There is a Vedic myth, which tells us that one wheel of the chariot of the Sun god was taken by Indra. Therefore, his chariot is always shown with only one wheel.
66. *ESB*, p. 30.
67. The Bhumārā Sūrya carved inside a *caitya*-window panel of the Śiva temple at Bhumārā has been described by R.D. Banerjee thus: The god is standing and has two hands. There is a plain halo behind his head and he wears a tall cylindrical headdress. In his left hand, he holds a lotus while his right hand is damaged (it must also have held a lotus). The god wears long boots of soft leather and long coat tied at the waist with a sash. He is attended by two men who wear peculiarly long Scythian coats tied with a belt and long boots. They also wear tall pointed conical caps like the Scythians. The figure on the right holds a lance or spear in his right hand while that on the left holds a lotus. The horses of the Sun god either seven or four in number are absent). (M.A.S.I., No. 16 (The temple of Śiva at Bhumārā), p.13, pl. XIVa; *JISOA*, p. 62).
68. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 80.
69. *ESB*, p. 22.
70. *DHI*, p. 436; *ESB*, p. 30.

71. *DHI*, pp. 22, 436.
72. *ESB*, p. 30; *JISOA*, p. 81; *IBBS*, p.172.
73. *IBBS*, p. 172.
74. *ESB*, pp. 31-32.
75. *HB*-I, pl. XXX. fig. 76, LXVIII, fig. 166 etc; Banerji, R.D., *Eastern School of Medieval Sculpture*, French, J.C., *Art of the Pāla Empire of Bengal.*
76. *BSHI*, pp. 188-189, pl. 161.
77. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 76.
78. Dikshit, K.N., *Excavations at Pāhārpur*, Delhi, 1938, p. 60.
79. Dasgupta, Subrata Kumar, 'History of the Sūrya Image in Bengal, *Folklore*, December 1967, p. 424.
80. *HB-I*, p.457; *JISOA*, pp. 81-82; St. Kramrisch, *Rūpam*, Vol. 40.
81. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 82.
82. *Ibid.*,
83. *Vangiya Sahitya Parisad Catalogue*, 76-77, PI. XVII; *HB-I*, p. 457.
84. *IBBS*, pp.169-170, pl. LXVIII; *BSHI*, pp.185-186.
85. *SWAI-P*, p. 100.
86. Malda Museum Nos. RSR-15, 16, 27; Bhattacharya, Malay Sankar, *Art in Stone : A Catalogue of Sculptures in Malda Museum*, Māldā, 1982, pp. 18-20.
87. *SWAI-P*, p. 104.
88. Bhattacharya, M.S., *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.
89. VRM no. 734; *AR-VRS*, 1927-28, p. 3, fig. 3; SVRM, p. 250, pl.242; *BSHI*, p.193.
90. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 350.
91. *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 310.
92. Quoted by Rao, *EHI*, pp. 310-11.
93. (1) Vikrampur (Dhaka) BNM, *IBBS*, pp.170, 3A (iii) a/2; (2) Vikrampur (Dhaka) BNM no.75, *IBBS*, pp.170-71, 3A (iii)a/4; (3); Nahapara (Dhaka), BNM No. 80, *IBBS*, p. 170, 3A (iii)a/3; (4) Ārial (near Nahapara), *IBBS*, p. 170; (5) Rajair (Faridpur), BNM no.77; *IBBS*, p.173.3, pl. LXI.a; (6) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363; (7) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363; (8) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363;(9) Pakilara (Comilla); B.C. Law Volume II, pp. 219, 231, pl. XIXb; (10) Comilla dist., *IBBS*, p.173, No. 4; (11) Kulkudi (Faridpur), BNM No. 60, Bhattashali, N. K., *EI*, Vol. XXVII, 1947-48, p. 25, plate opposite p. 25; *HB*-I, pl. LXX, 169; *BSHI* 190, pl. 165.
94. Ramachandran, T. N, 'Recent Archaeological Discoveries along the Maināmatī and Lalmai Ranges, Tippera District, East Bengal', *B.C. Law Volume*, Part II, Poona, 1946. p. 219.
95. Bhattashali, N.K., *EI.*, Vol. XXVII, 1947-48, p. 25, plate opposite p. 25; *HB-I*, pl. LXX, 169; *BSHI*, p. 190, pl. 165.
96. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
97. *BSHI*, p. 190.
98. *Ibid.*,
99. *IBBS*, p. 173.
100. In the Sūrya image (second/first century B.C.) from Bhājā the god is found escorted by figures on horseback, both male and female, one of which is provided with some kind of stirrups. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 54.
101. *BSHI*, p. 190.
102. *IBBS*, p. 170, 3A (iii) a/2.

103. The earliest representation of an umbrella spread is found over the nimbus behind the Bodh-Gayā Sūrya image of first century B.C., *JISOA*, XVI, p.53.
104. Bhattashali, N.K. (Ed.), *EI.* Vol. 27 1947-48, pp. 25-26. The alternative translation of the first line would be "(This is the image of) of the Sun god, caused to be made by the illustrious Lakṣmīdīna. Sircar, D.C., *Bhāratavarṣa*, Chaitra, 1348 B.S., p. 397.
105. *ASIAR*, 1930-34, p. 37.
106. *BSHI*, p.189; Stone, Nanigram (Hooghly), AMC No.31; Stone, Amanpur (Midnapore); Stone, Siddha (Midnapore); Stone, Dalmi (Purulia), *AMTSI*, II, p.41, pl. 291.
107. IMC No. 8601, A16241; *ASIAR*, 1930-34, pp. 256-57, pl. CXXVIIc; *HB*-I, p. 457, pl. XV, fig. 39; *JISOA*, p. 82-83; *JASB*, XXVIII, 1932, pp. 147-150, pl. 2; *BSHI*, pp. 192- 193, pl. 124) seated (Plate 124).
108. Stone, Bashihari, W. Dinajpur in SAGC; *SBHI*, p. 187, pl. 157.
109. BNM Nos. 61 & 66.31; *BSHI*, p. 189, pl. 162.
110. *Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Maruta, Kuvera* and *Īśa.*
111. *Ananta, Vāsuki, Padma, Mahāpadma, Takṣaka, Kulīra, Karkaṭa* and *āayṅkha.*
112. *IBBS*, pp.172-173, pl. LX; *BSHI*, p. 191, pl. 167; *EIAP*, pp. 92-94.
113. It may be mentioned here that Bhattasali (*IBBS*, p. 172-173) could not give satisfactory identification of these images. Later on Enamul Hoque also remained silent about the identification in question (*BSHI*, p. 191).
114. Mallmann de Mlle, *Les enseignnements Iconographiques de L'Agni-Purāṇa*, p. 93; *JISOA*, X, p. 239.
115. Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I, 1927, p. 536; Monier Williams, W., *Religious Thought and Life in India*, London, 1891, pp. 411-12; Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, pp. 327-28, *Matsya P.*, L V.3.5, *Brahma P.*, 33.11.14, *Kālikā P.*, 74.113, *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, Ch. I09.5; *Agni P.*, Ch. 73 and many later Upa-Purāṇas identify Sūrya, Śiva and other gods. *Kuta Mantm* of Java (Quoted by Biswas, D.K. 'Sūrya and Śiva', *IHQ.*, 1948, vol. 24, pp. 142ff) shows this religious syncretism.
116. Nirmand copper plate inscription identifies Śiva with Mihira (Persian Mithra), Fleet, J.F., *CII*,, vol. III, pp. 288-89.
117. *AR-VRS.* 1932-33, pp. 15-16, pl.1, fig.1; *DHI.* p. 550, pl.XLVII.3; *HB-I*, p. 457-58, pl. 1.6; *SAB*, p. 207. Fig. X7; *SVRM*, pp. 269-270, Plate 252; *BSHI*, pp. 193-194, pl.170; *JASB*, XXVIII, 1932, pp. 190-192.
118. *Pratimā-lakṣaṇa*, pp. 86-87.
119. *HB-I*, p. 458.
120. *South Indian Gods and Goddesses*, Madras, 1916, p. 236; fig. 144.
121. *IA.*, 1918. pp. 136 ff.
122. *JASB, XXVIII*, 1932, p. 192.
123. *AR-VRS*, 1929.30. pp.9-10, pl. 2; *DHI*, pp. 549-550; *HB-I*, p. 458, pl. XVI.40; *SVRM*, p. 269, pl. 251; *BSHI*, pp. 194-195, pl. 171.
124. *Śāradātilaka, Paṭala* XIV.41.2.
125. *DHI*, p. 550.
126. Sarkar, K. C., "A New Form of Sūrya from Varendra", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, vol. VI, No. 1, March 1930, pp. 465-70 and plate.
127. *DHI*, p. 549. Sivaramamurti refers to an image of this iconic form from Konarak in Orissa. See *JAS* (Letters), XXI, 1955, no.2, p.83, fig.17.
128. *EIAP*, p. 106.
129. At Damoh, Bundelkhand, *IA*, 1918, pp.136-138, plate II; at Chidambaram, Madras, *SII.* P. 236. fig. 144.
130. *Agni P.* 73. 16-17 (*Bibliotheca Indica* Ed.) Vol. I, pp. 210-11.

71. *DHI*, pp. 22, 436.
72. *ESB*, p. 30; *JISOA*, p. 81; *IBBS*, p.172.
73. *IBBS*, p. 172.
74. *ESB*, pp. 31-32.
75. *HB*-I, pl. XXX. fig. 76, LXVIII, fig. 166 etc; Banerji, R.D., *Eastern School of Medieval Sculpture*, French, J.C., *Art of the Pāla Empire of Bengal*.
76. *BSHI*, pp. 188-189, pl. 161.
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82. *Ibid.*,
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84. *IBBS*, pp.169-170, pl. LXVIII; *BSHI*, pp.185-186.
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86. Malda Museum Nos. RSR-15, 16, 27; Bhattacharya, Malay Sankar, *Art in Stone : A Catalogue of Sculptures in Malda Museum*, Māldā, 1982, pp. 18-20.
87. *SWAI-P*, p. 104.
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90. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 350.
91. *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 310.
92. Quoted by Rao, *EHI*, pp. 310-11.
93. (1) Vikrampur (Dhaka) BNM, *IBBS*, pp.170, 3A (iii) a/2; (2) Vikrampur (Dhaka) BNM no.75, *IBBS*, pp.170-71, 3A (iii)a/4; (3); Nahapara (Dhaka), BNM No. 80, *IBBS*, p. 170, 3A (iii)a/3; (4) Ārial (near Nahapara), *IBBS*, p. 170; (5) Rajair (Faridpur), BNM no.77; *IBBS*, p.173.3, pl. LXI.a; (6) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363; (7) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363; (8) East Bengal, BNM, *BSHI*, p.363; (9) Pakilara (Comilla); B.C. Law Volume II, pp. 219, 231, pl. XIXb; (10) Comilla dist., *IBBS*, p.173, No. 4; (11) Kulkudi (Faridpur), BNM No. 60, Bhattashali, N. K., *EI*, Vol. XXVII, 1947-48, p. 25, plate opposite p. 25; *HB*-I, pl. LXX, 169; *BSHI* 190, pl. 165.
94. Ramachandran, T. N, 'Recent Archaeological Discoveries along the Maināmatī and Lalmai Ranges, Tippera District, East Bengal', *B.C. Law Volume*, Part II, Poona, 1946. p. 219.
95. Bhattashali, N.K., *EI.*, Vol. XXVII, 1947-48, p. 25, plate opposite p. 25; *HB-I*, pl. LXX, 169; *BSHI*, p. 190, pl. 165.
96. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
97. *BSHI*, p. 190.
98. *Ibid.*,
99. *IBBS*, p. 173.
100. In the Sūrya image (second/first century B.C.) from Bhājā the god is found escorted by figures on horseback, both male and female, one of which is provided with some kind of stirrups. *JISOA*, XVI, p. 54.
101. *BSHI*, p. 190.
102. *IBBS*, p. 170, 3A (iii) a/2.

103. The earliest representation of an umbrella spread is found over the nimbus behind the Bodh-Gayā Sūrya image of first century B.C., *JISOA*, XVI, p.53.
104. Bhattashali, N.K. (Ed.), *EI.* Vol. 27 1947-48, pp. 25-26. The alternative translation of the first line would be "(This is the image of) of the Sun god, caused to be made by the illustrious Lakṣmīdīna. Sircar, D.C., *Bhāratavarṣa*, Chaitra, 1348 B.S., p. 397.
105. *ASIAR*, 1930-34, p. 37.
106. *BSHI*, p.189; Stone, Nanigram (Hooghly), AMC No.31; Stone, Amanpur (Midnapore); Stone, Siddha (Midnapore); Stone, Dalmi (Purulia), *AMTSI*, II, p.41, pl. 291.
107. IMC No. 8601, A16241; *ASIAR*, 1930-34, pp. 256-57, pl. CXXVIIc; *HB*-I, p. 457, pl. XV, fig. 39; *JISOA*, p. 82-83; *JASB*, XXVIII, 1932, pp. 147-150, pl. 2; *BSHI*, pp. 192- 193, pl. 124) seated (Plate 124).
108. Stone, Bashihari, W. Dinajpur in SAGC; *SBHI*, p. 187, pl. 157.
109. BNM Nos. 61 & 66.31; *BSHI*, p. 189, pl. 162.
110. *Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Maruta, Kuvera* and *Īśa.*
111. *Ananta, Vāsuki, Padma, Mahāpadma, Takṣaka, Kulīra, Karkaṭa* and *āayṅkha.*
112. *IBBS*, pp.172-173, pl. LX; *BSHI*, p. 191, pl. 167; *EIAP*, pp. 92-94.
113. It may be mentioned here that Bhattasali (*IBBS*, p. 172-173) could not give satisfactory identification of these images. Later on Enamul Hoque also remained silent about the identification in question (*BSHI*, p. 191).
114. Mallmann de Mlle, *Les enseignnements Iconographiques de L'Agni-Purāṇa*, p. 93; *JISOA*, X, p. 239.
115. Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I, 1927, p. 536; Monier Williams, W., *Religious Thought and Life in India*, London, 1891, pp. 411-12; Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, pp. 327-28, *Matsya P.*, L V.3.5, *Brahma P.*, 33.11.14, *Kālikā P.*, 74.113, *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, Ch. I09.5; *Agni P.*, Ch. 73 and many later Upa-Purāṇas identify Sūrya, Śiva and other gods. *Kuta Mantm* of Java (Quoted by Biswas, D.K. 'Sūrya and Śiva', *IHQ.*, 1948, vol. 24, pp. 142ff) shows this religious syncretism.
116. Nirmand copper plate inscription identifies Śiva with Mihira (Persian Mithra), Fleet, J.F., *CII*,, vol. III, pp. 288-89.
117. *AR-VRS.* 1932-33, pp. 15-16, pl.1, fig.1; *DHI.* p. 550, pl.XLVII.3; *HB-I*, p. 457-58, pl. 1.6; *SAB*, p. 207. Fig. X7; *SVRM*, pp. 269-270, Plate 252; *BSHI*, pp. 193-194, pl.170; *JASB*, XXVIII, 1932, pp. 190-192.
118. *Pratimā-lakṣaṇa*, pp. 86-87.
119. *HB-I*, p. 458.
120. *South Indian Gods and Goddesses*, Madras, 1916, p. 236; fig. 144.
121. *IA.*, 1918. pp. 136 ff.
122. *JASB, XXVIII*, 1932, p. 192.
123. *AR-VRS*, 1929.30. pp.9-10, pl. 2; *DHI*, pp. 549-550; *HB-I*, p. 458, pl. XVI.40; *SVRM*, p. 269, pl. 251; *BSHI*, pp. 194-195, pl. 171.
124. *Śāradātilaka, Paṭala* XIV.41.2.
125. *DHI*, p. 550.
126. Sarkar, K. C., "A New Form of Sūrya from Varendra", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, vol. VI, No. 1, March 1930, pp. 465-70 and plate.
127. *DHI*, p. 549. Sivaramamurti refers to an image of this iconic form from Konarak in Orissa. See *JAS* (Letters), XXI, 1955, no.2, p.83, fig.17.
128. *EIAP*, p. 106.
129. At Damoh, Bundelkhand, *IA*, 1918, pp.136-138, plate II; at Chidambaram, Madras, *SII.* P. 236. fig. 144.
130. *Agni P.* 73. 16-17 (*Bibliotheca Indica* Ed.) Vol. I, pp. 210-11.

131. *Ibid.*,
132. *Bṛhat-tantrasāra* (Basumati Ed.) p. 147.
133. Bhattacharya, P.K., Indian History Congress, *Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Session*, Utkal University, Bhuvaneswar, 1977, p. 791. For earlier reference also see Mitra, Sarat Candra, 'On the Cult of the Sun god in Medieval Eastern Bengal', *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Vol. XV, 1927, pp. 149-200.
134. Biswas, D. K., *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 26, year 1950, p. 168; Jash, Pranabananda, 'Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava' in *History of Śaivism*, Calcutta, 1974,.
135. 74. 113, (Vaṅgabasi Ed.) p. 475.
136. *SVRM*, pp. 247-248, pl. 240; *VRM* 654; *AR-VRS*, 1925-26, p.9; *BSHI*, p. 193.
137. *DHI*, pp. 547-548, pl. XLVIII.3; Bhattacharyya, Dipak Chandra, *Iconology of Composite Images*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 25, fig. 20; *BSHI*, p.195; Chatterjee, Rama, *Religion in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1985, p.379.
138. *DHI*, pp. 547-548.
139. *HBP*, p. 438.
140. Mitra, Debala, "A Study of some graha-images of India and their possible bearing on the *Navadevatās* of Cambodia", *JASB*, Vll, 1965, pp. 13-37.
141. Ibid., p. 26.
142. AMC no, Am. 119; *VRSAR*, 1928-29, App. p. 6. pl. 5; *HB-I*, p. 459, pl. XVII. 43; *DHI*, pp. 444-445, pl. XXXI. fig.2; *Indian Historical Quarterly*, IX, pp. 202-7; *JISOA*, p. 100.
143. Appendices to the *VRS.-Rep.* 1928-29, p. 6, fig. 5.
144. (i)Nayabazar, VRM no. 323; (ii) Daharol, VRM no. 1474; *VRSAR*, 1932-33, p. 15; (iii) SAGC no. S. 232; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 14; (iv) SAGC no. S.224; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 14; (v) at Sarala; (vi) Bangadh, SAGC, no. S. 34: *JASB*, VII, 1965. pp. 20- 21, pl. X, fig. 10; (vii) at Khamrua.
145. (i) Manda, VRM no. 1580; *VRSAR*, 1936-38, p. 23; (ii) SVRM, VRM no. 2682. Here Gaṇeśa is four-armed, with axe and *aṅkuśa* in the upper hands and a *bījapuraka* and a bowl of sweets in the lower right hand and lower left hand respectively. (iii) A K M M no. 7/p.7.
146. Madnabati, AKMM no. 8/p. ARI.
147. Mallarpur, SAGC, no. S. 167; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 22, pl. XII, fig. 12.
148. AMC no. T. 7271; *IA-Rev.* 1960-61, p. 70; *JASB* VII, 1965, p. 21, pl. XI. 11.
149. *BSHI*, p.198, Plate 176.
150. Kushmandi, W. Dinajpur, SAGC no. S. 58; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 14.
151. *BSHI*, p. 199, pl. 177. The panels are: (i) Balurghat (West Dinajpur), eleventh century., VRM no. 50; SVRM, p.271, pl. 255; (ii) Gaur (Māldā), IMC no. Gr. 13; *Anderson-Cat.* II, p. 261; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 15, Plate II, fig. 2; (iii) Talanda (Nadia), AMC no. T. 3683; *JASB*, VII, 1965, pp. 16-17, plate IV. 4; (iv) Malda. Malda Mus. Cat., p.12.
152. (i) Dinajpur Dist., BNM No. 70.1349; (ii) W. Dinajpur Dist, SAGC no. S. 225; *JASB*, VII, 1965, p. 22, pl. XII, fig. 13.
153. *DHI*, plate XXXI.1.
154. Bengal, SAGC no. S. 213/214; *JASB* VII, 1965, pp. 17-18, pl. VI. 6.
155. No. 60; *MASI*, No. 55 (Pāhārpur), pp. 53-54, pl. XXXb; *ESB*, pp. 66-67, pl. IX. fig. 24; *ASIAR*, 1925-26, p.111; *HB-I*, p. 459, pl. LVI, 138; *JISOA*, pp. 97-98; *BSHI*, p. 200.
156. *ASIAR*, 1925-26, p. 111.
157. *MASI*, no. 55 (Pāhārpur), p. 54.
158. '*kuṇḍikājapyamālinduḥ*'(Candra should have a '*kuṇḍikā*' (water vessel) and a '*japyamala*'

(a rosary of beads), 51.10-12.

159. *ESB*, pp. 66-67.

160. No. 61; *MASI* No.55 ('Pāhārpur'), p. 54, pl. XXXd; *ESB*, pp. 65-66, pl. IX. fig. 23; *HB*-I, p. 459, pl. LVI. 139.

161. *ASIAR*, 1925-26, p. 69. 111.

162. *MASI*, no. 55 ('Pāhārpur'), p. 54, pl. XXXc.

163. *Malda Mus. Cat.*, p. 8, No. RBR-1; *MRSCB*, p. 287.

164. Sarkar, Bijoy Kumar, 'The Worship of Revanta in Bengal', *Proceedings of the Indiana History Congress*, 64th Session, Mysore University, 2003, pp. 286-294.

165. Ch. 57, V. 56.

166. Bk. III, Ch. 70, V. 53.

167. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Chap. 108, verses 11, 19-22 (Bib. Ind. Edition).

168. K.P., 85, 46-49.

169. *Ibid.*, 6.79, 78.6.

170. *JASB*, 1909, pp. 391-392.

171. *IBBS*. pp. 174-177; *Indian Historical Quarterly, III*, pp. 469-472; *JISOA, XVI*, pp.91-93; *DHI*. pp. 442-443.

172. *'Pujyaḥ sāśvaiśca revanto yathāvibhavavistaraiḥ'*, '*Tithitattva*', p. 690.

173. *SVRM*, p. 268, VRM No.1532.

174. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268; VRM No.1531:

175. *Ibid.*, p.267; Sanyal, Nirad Bandhu, "A New type of Revanta from the Dinajpur District", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1927 pp. 469-72 and plate facing p. 469.

176. *IBBS*, p.175; *BSHI*, p.196.

177. Sarkar, Bijoy Kumar, 'Bihāre Revanta Pūjā'(in Bengali), *Itihas Anusandhan 19* (Collection of Essays presented at the 20th Annual Conference of Paschim Banga Itihās Samsad held at New Alipore College Kolkata, 24-25 January 2004, pp. 131 140.

178. *JASB*, 1909, p. 392, pl. XXX.

179. Sharma, B.N., *Iconography of Revanta*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 54-57.

180. S.P., 44. 1.11.217-18.

181. Incidentally, it is also worth mentioning that Revanta was a favourite god of the Gonds, a tribal clan of Madhya Pradesh, who were fond of hunting animals and eating their flesh (Sharma, B.N., *op .cit.* pp. 58-59). The overall form of the Revanta images suggests that he was a folk deity of hunting communities and was connected with popular life, but later he was accepted into Brāhmaṇism, bound in blood relationship with the equestrian Sūrya (Ray, Nihar Ranjan, *Bāṅgālīr Itihās* (in Bengali), First edition, p. 627). He does not seem to have had that popularity in the orthodox Brāhmiṇcal circle, and belonged to the folk religion, his cult being an adjunct of Sun worship (*HB-I*, p. 409).

182. *SVRM*, p. 270, pl. 253; VRM No. 167.

183. *Ibid.*, pl. 254; VRM No. 168.

Chapter - 6

DECLINE IN THE POPULARITY OF SUN WORSHIP

The popularity of the Sun worship in Bengal down to the end of Hindu rule is indicated by the opening verse in the copperplates of Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena in praise of the Sun god. The extant remains of the icons of Sūrya, dated or undated, also suggest the continuity of Sun worship until at least the early medieval period. Perhaps, this popularity was partly the cause as well as effect of the deep-rooted belief recorded on the pedestal of a Sūrya image from Bairhaṭṭā (Dinajpur District) that the god was the healer of all diseases (‘*samasta-rogāṇāṁ harttā*’). However, since the early part of the thirteenth century A.D. things began to change in the disfavour of the Sun-cult. In actuality, the process started long back, specifically since the Sena Period. The northern style Sūrya and his worship probably did not last long after the Varman-Sena period; at least we hardly come across any such images afterwards.

There could be various reasons for the subsequent decline in the importance and anthropomorphic worship of the Sun in early Bengal. However, it is also to be kept in mind that the solar worship in the forms stated above did not only disappear from this part of eastern India, but also from the rest of the Indian sub-continent. Naturally, the question rises as to what led to the decline of the solar-cult.

No Mysticism, Symbolism or High Philosophy around Sūrya

The daily visibility of the Sun to naked eye prevented the sectarians to develop any mysticism, symbolism or high philosophy centering round him. Consequently, though he became popular universally due to simplicity of concept and beneficence, highest devotion could not be given to a phenomenon that was visible to the naked eye. No distinct school or schools of philosophy did ever grow up around the Sun god, as they developed round the two major Paurāṇic systems. We find extensive religious literature in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D around Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism[1] but almost nothing about Sūrya. As a result, no backing of high philosophy[2] was available to him — a fact that is so essential for greatness in religious matters.

Popularity of Ekāntika Worship

In the early medieval period, the emphasis was given upon the *‘ekāntikā’* worship of the *'Iṣṭadeva'* due to monotheistic ideas reaching North from the South. The *ekāntika* worship became more popular than the *smārta* type, of which the syncretic icons and *Pañcāyatana* temples were the products. It may be that the *ekāntika* attitude was regarded as better fitted to meet the challenge of Islam. Someone who believed in his *Iṣṭadeva* could not give an important position to a god (*i.e.* Sūrya) liable to be identified with rival gods — Brahmā, Viṣṇu or Śiva.[3]

Degradation of Sun Worshipping Maga Brahmaṇas

The immense popularity of Sun worship in anthropomorphic form as well as in the temples was a direct contribution of the Irānian Maga Brāhmaṇas. We have already seen that after their advent in India in the fifth century B.C., they remained neglected for long in the orthodox Hindu society, as their customs varied with those of the Indians in many fundamental points. Their position, however, distinctly improved later on. Still, on account of their peculiar customs, these Brāhmaṇas remained distinct and separate from the majority of the Indian Brāhmaṇa community from an early time."[4]

In the opinion of the orthodox Brāhmaṇas, the study of astrology and practice of medicine were some of the condemned vocations and very much reprehensible on the part of the Brāhmaṇas.[5] On the contrary, the Śākadvīpī or Devala Brāhmaṇas used to cultivate astrology, palmistry and the casting of horoscope etc. They also officiated in the *grahayajña* as priests with a view to propitiating the planets, prescribed amulets and practiced treatment of smallpox, etc.[6] Pursuit of these censurable arts and sciences reduced them to an extremely degraded position.

It has been suggested[7] that in course of time the Sun worshipping Magas were divided into two groups – of the Magas and the Bhojakas later on degraded as the Yājakas. Bhojakas or Yājakas or the Sevakas appear to have been indigenous priests of the Sun cult as they are described as chanting Vedic *mantras* etc.[8] Most probably, the Bhojakas followed this injunction at the beginning but deviated from it later on. In addition, they entered into matrimonial alliances with foreigners like the Magas. According to Monier Williams,[9] the Bhojakas themselves were the descendants of the Magas through the women of the *Bhoja* race. The Gaṇakas (astrologer, also called Graha-vipra) are said to be the issues of Devala (Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇa) father and Vaiśya mother.[10] Because of this prohibited inter-caste marriage or origin from unwanted matrimony, the Bhojakas came to be degraded as low or *apāṅkteya*[11] or Devalaka- Brāhmaṇas[12] (temple-priests). It may be derived specifically from the Deo-Baranark (Shahabad, Bihar) inscription that with the temple of the Sun god were associated the Bhojakas.[13] The service of a *pūjārī* or priest of a popular god, who officiates at smaller shrines and lives upon the offerings made to the idol has always been held to be degrading and is never performed by any higher class Brāhmaṇas.[14] The name *Bhojaka* is taken to have originated from their function of eating first on *Śrāddha*-ceremony. Varāhamihira[15] informs us, "the Brāhmaṇa who knows very well the (astronomical and astrological) works and their meaning, is the first to eat the food (*Agrabhuk*) offered to the manes". It is but natural to presume that an *agrabhuk* Brāhmaṇa would be looked upon as fallen in the higher circle of the Hindu society.

N.N. Vasu, based on an early text *Brahmajālalasutta*[16] held that the magic priest were held in disrepute since the days of Buddha. It is well known that the Magas were famous for their magic and occult power. It is quite probable that the Buddhist text had Magas in mind while referring to the magic priests in the time of Buddha. The Magas were in disrepute too in India because of their objectionable practices.

The Graha-vipras are said to have been hypocrite and even described as '*Kaitavabid*' (Master fraud).[17] They were well known in the society for their fraudulence. That they were not respectable everywhere in the society and looked down upon as fallen has been indicated in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* because of their dependence on astrology. A section of these Brāhmaṇas called Agradāṇī Brāhmaṇa were also considered as fallen because of their practice to receive the first gift in the funeral ceremony from the *Śūdras*.[18]

The Maga Brāhmaṇas, since the very beginning, extended religious privileges to women and men of lower class.[19] The priests of the castes belonging to *Madhyama* (intermediate) and *Adhama* (low) *Samkaras* are said to be degraded *(patita)* Brāhmaṇas, who attain the status of the castes they serve. The idea gradually grew that the Brāhmaṇas serving the lower castes attained their rank.[20] Therefore, it can be said safely that because of their association with the people of lower strata, the position of the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas was lowered beyond measure in the eye of the higher society. In this connection it is possible, as it has been suggested, that the Sun-worshipping Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas including the *pūjārī* were illiterate.[21] In contrast with erudition of the scholars belonging to the Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite order, it is apparent that the Saura Devala Brāhmaṇas could hardly expect any royal patronage from the kings other than those who did not profess Saura religion.

The descendants of the early Maga immigrants finally lost their position in the society, if they ever at all enjoyed any high position there. Being deprived of their status, these Brāhmaṇas sought to establish supremacy over the low-class untouchables and it was from then that solar worship became almost extinct in higher Hindu society.[22] The indigenous *Sūrya-pūjā* and its alien form were mixed up and its separate existence as a cult for the exclusive worship of the deity was obliterated.[23]

The Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas who traditionally enjoyed vast powers and privileges in India for a long time could not tolerate that a new class of people like the Maga Brāhmaṇas should usurp their supremacy. The Magas were originally the priests of the foreign people who exercised influence tempoararily over portions of the country, but were ultimately absorbed in the Hindu fold.

No Development of *Saura-Śakti*

Bengal became one of the leading centers of the Śākta cult during the last two or three centuries of her ancient period. Even as early as seventh-eighth century A.D. Śākta goddess was worshipped in *Rādhā* and *Varendrī* with Tāntric rites by a man in collaboration with a woman, as found in the *Devī Purāṇa*.[24] Most of the Tāntric books were not only written in Bengal, but also the full burgeoning of Tāntricism took place here.

The major mental focus of the Sena-Varman-Deva ages was the meditation and concepts entrenched in astrology, the *Āgamas, Nigamas* and *Tantra.* Śaivism, one of the major sects in Bengal, had been influenced by Tāntric concepts and practices. It would seem that during the Pāla period, the figures of the divine couple, *Umā* and *Maheśvara,* had captivated the Bengali mind. The embracing figures of Śiva and *Umā* came to be a concept of Bengali Tāntric Śāktism. Sitting comfortably in the lap of Śiva, bound in embrace and smiling joyously, *Umā* was indeed the *Tripurasundarī* of the power of Śiva, of the Tāntric devotees, the meditation of which was the highest form of *dhyānayoga.* In a few images of *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa* from eastern and northern Bengal, Lakṣmī appears seated on the left knee of Viṣṇu, which readily reminds one of the contemporary images of Śiva and *Umā-Maheśvara.* The development of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal in the Sena-Varman period was largely enhanced because of the evolution of the *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* concept and the concept of *Rādhā* very likely developed under the influence of Śāktism.[25]

Sun worship also adopted Tāntric practices but remaining free from some fundamental concepts of Tāntricism such as the conception of a female principle who in association with a male principle is responsible for the evolution of the universe.[26] No such concept as of *Prajñā* of Tāntric Buddhism and *Umā* of Tāntric Hinduism could be developed round the name of *Saṁjñā* or *Chāyā* — wives of the Sun god — by the solar sectarians. His consorts were never given any separate worship in Bengal, which is psychologically a matriarchal region under a tremendous impact of Tāntricism, not to speak of according as much high position as that of *Lakṣmī, Umā* or *Rādhā.* Naturally, the Bengalis did not keep on feeling attracted in the sect or the cult, which is devoid of matriarchal element, which does not believe in the independent entity of *Śakti* and engage in her worship. It is significant to note that no image of the Sun with the female consort in Tāntric sense has been found so far. The solar sectarians did not popularize this concept and convert it into Tāntric doctrine of a *Saura-Śakti* particularly when other sectarians were adopting it.[27]

No single deity had ever been able to reach the core of the Bengali heart. It was the divinities in company with the dominant *śaktis* that have always occupied the highest position in their mind. Therefore, the deities like *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Umā-Maheśvara* and *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* reign supreme here. Conversely, Brahmā, one of the most important divinities of the Hindu Trinity, is given a secondary position in the religious pantheon and invoked only during the offering of oblation along with the *Kusaṇḍikā* hymn of marriage. Similarly, Gaṇeśa also could not gain much influence in the psyche of the Bengal people. He receives worship from the mercantile community only as a giver of success and at the beginning of occasional religious ceremonies in the houses of the *smārta*-people. The same thing happened also in case of Sūrya.

Inclusion of Sūrya in *Pañcopāsanā*

Another factor of importance, which might have halted the march of the Sun worship, was the inclusion of the Sun god in the system of *Pañcopāsanā.* Sun god was considered the cause of everything of the world. He was responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction. Thus, gradually developed the philosophic view that all deities being his manifestations, his worship can, without any philosophic contradiction, be combined with the worship of other deities.[28] It also seems that the groupings of five principal deities at one place came into existence out of keen rivalry and competition among the respective sects. It must have resulted in mutual understanding among them and harmonious relation with one another. Alternatively, this keen rivalry and competition among the various sects might have infused a fear of curse in their minds in the event of not worshipping the other equally benevolent or harmful gods. This sort of thinking resulted in the worship of chief deities in a group. In view of the Muslim aggression and danger from Islam, a pressing necessity of unity among the followers of different sects might have also impelled them to think of worship of five main deities in a group. Thus originated the syncretic images, *Pañcopāsanā* and *Pañcāyatana* temples. Whatever may be the case, it has been enjoined by the *Smṛtikāras* that in the daily worship, one has to pay one's obeisance to the five deities namely, Gaṇeśa, Nārāyaṇa, Sūrya, Śiva and āakti. A Brāhmaṇa, officiating as a priest for the worship of any god or goddess, is found to perform initially *Pañcopāsanā* or the worship of five-deities.[29] '*Sūryāya namaḥ*' is the usual mantra used by the priests for performing the worship of the Sun god. Significantly enough, the utterance of the mantra '*Ādityādi navagrahebhyaḥ namaḥ*' is the usual practice of the priests. It accommodates the name of Āditya (Sun god) along with those of the nine planets. The system of worship (*Pūjā-Vidhāna*), as approved by the *Purāṇas* and the *Smṛti-nibandhakāras* of Bengal, has left no scope of exclusive worship of the Sun god.

Non-availability of Royal Patronage

The royal patronage of a religion is not only a good index of its general influence and popularity, but also an important factor for its prolonged and dominant survival. In Bengal, the Pre-Pāla dynasties of the Khadgas in Samataṭa and Kāntideva in Chaṭṭagrām, as well as the Pāla, Candra and Kamboja dynasties and individual rulers like Raṇavaṅkamalla of Paṭṭikera were all Buddhists. Vainyagupta (*Mahādeva-pādānudhāya*), Śaśāṅka,[30] Lokanātha, Dommanapāla and the early Sena rulers like *Parama-Śaiva* Vijayasena and *Parama-Śaiva* Vallālasena were all Śaivas. The Varmans of East Bengal, the later Sena kings like *Parama-Vaiṣṇava* Vijayasena and the Deva family of Tripura-Noakhali- Chaṭṭagrām region were *Vaiṣṇavas.* No royal Saura family is known in Bengal. In fact, Sun worship was not the official religion in India. Only the Sena kings Viśvarūpa and Sūryasena, who most probably ruled from 1206 -1225 A.D. styled themselves *Parama-Saura, i.e.* devout worshippers of the Sun, but that too after professing the two great faiths (*i.e.,* Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism) followed by their ancestors.[31] Lack of royal patronage not only prevented the Sun cult from enjoying added popularity among a large body of people but also disabled its counsels to be influential with the rulers. Thus deprived of easy and secure livelihood through private or royal charity, they could not devote themselves with full time, attention and enthusiasm to the all-round advancement of the Sun cult.

Eclipse of Sūrya by Viṣṇu

Assimilation of some features belonging to two Hindu cult gods became a common factor in the religious arena, which is clearly visible between Sūrya and Viṣṇu too. Mention may be made of *Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa* that acquired great circulation in medieval time. *Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa* is actually regarded as a form of Viṣṇu, which points to merger of Sun worship in the Viṣṇu cult.[32] Equal faith of a devotee to both Viṣṇu and Sūrya is indicated by the two halves of his name, *viz, Viśvāditya* and *Viśvarūpa* recorded in *Akṣayavaṭa Praśasti* of Yakṣapāla's father Viśvāditya-Viśvarūpa.[33] Fusion of these two gods seems not to be uncommon. Both the divinities had originally the same common source of Vedic Sūrya. Purāṇas also show their identical relation. The *Agni Purāṇa* states that the Sun god is another manifestation of the god Viṣṇu who is extolled and glorified in the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* and is the source of all good and evil.[34] In the *Sāmba Purāṇa*, it is said that the Sun was worshipped as Viṣṇu in *Śvetadvīpa*.[35]

With the rise of Vaiṣṇavism, the Sun god gradually began to loose much of his importance, as Viṣṇu, originally a solar deity, absorbed in himself much of the elements that had been attributed to Sūrya in the earlier days.[36] Even in iconography, there also occurs no special distinction between the concepts of the image of Viṣṇu and that of the standing, four-armed Sūrya upon a lotus with the two wives, Saṁjñā and Chāyā, on either side, and before him the charicteer of the Sun. Thus, it was not difficult for Viṣṇu to eclipse Sūrya, at least in Bengal.[37] As there was already a popular sect round Viṣṇu – a form of the Sun,[38] the question of a Saura sect could not possibly have arisen in the people's mind. Because of prolonged royal patronage, missionary zeal of a large body of distinguished and dedicated Brāhmaṇas and adaptation with the prevailing Tāntricism, Vaiṣṇavism became so dominant and aggressive a religion as to turn the Sun god of whom he was just an insignificant aspect in the Vedas, into a part of his body. This finds an excellent reflection in verse 1 of the Sian Stone Inscription[39] (approx. 1043 A.D.) and in verse 2 of the Kamauli Copper Plate[40] (1132 A.D.) of Vaidyadeva, where Sūrya, 'borne on a seven-horse chariot', has been described as the right eye of Hari (Viṣṇu). Viṣṇu's superiority over Sūrya is noticeable even in the solar *vrata*. In the *Sūrya-Vrata* performed by the people of Chittagong, one set of food-offerings is presented by the priest to Viṣṇu, the Preserver of the world, who is, at first, propitiated and another set to the Sun deity.[41]

Identification of Sūrya with Śiva

Besides Vaiṣṇavism, āaivism was also a great sect in the Brāhmaṇical religion in early Bengal. Like the former, it had also enjoyed state support from some of the Gupta and Sena rulers in addition to that of Śaśāṅka, Lokanātha, Dommanapāla etc. and intense devotion of a large number of Brāhmaṇas besides enormous strength flowing from the Tāntric cult. For reasons stated above, Sun cult was not in a position to cope with Śaivism and preferred to link the Sun deity with *Maheśvara*. The composite image of *Mārttaṇḍa Bhairava* serves as an excellent illustration of this tendency, which is also but a pointer to the weakened position of the Sun god. Scale turned in disfavour of Sūrya to such an extent that he came to be identified with Śiva in the *Matsya Purāṇa.* Hence, in the *Ādityaśayana Vrata* it is enjoined that the worship of *Umā-Maheśvara* be done with the recitation of the names of Sūrya and *Sūryācā* should be done on the *Śivaliṅga* (55-56). Both the deities occur in the *Matsya Purāṇa* (68-35) in a compound *viz. Raviśaṅkarau.* In the *Sāmba Purāṇa,* the Sun is said to have been worshipped as *Maheśvara* in Kuśadvīpa.[42] In the *Śaiva* system, the Sun is not a mere votary of Śiva, but also one of his *aṣṭamūrtis* (*Mālavikāgnimitra,* I, 1). The identity of Sūrya with Śiva may be traced back as early as the *Ṛgveda.* In some passages of the *Ṛgveda,* Agni is identified with the Sun.[43] Moreover, Śākapūṇi, a predecessor of Yāska, expounded a theory of three-fold existence of Agni, *viz.* terrestrial, aerial and heavenly based on the *Ṛgveda* -10.88.10 (*Nirukta* 7.28). Moreover, Rudra is closely connected with Agni in the *Ṛgveda.*[44] This easily explains the above injunction and the identity of Śiva and Sūrya.[45]

It is interesting to note here that this tradition continued in an altered forms as folk gods of Bengal, where both of them stood for gods of fertility cult.

It appears from the available evidence that the preponderance of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism over-shadowed the cult of the Sun god, which consequently further declined. Royal patronage secured by these two sects from the Senas, no doubt, added much to their strength and popularity. The worst position of the Sun god may be gleaned from a stone image of *Harihara* (Pl. 22b) belonging to the twelve-thirteenth century A.D. The central figure represents Śiva in the right half and Viṣṇu in the left half and both the gods are provided with respective *āyudhas, vāhanas* and *śaktis.* In the background at the extreme right appears a standing Buddha in *abhayamudrā* and in the corresponding position to the left is Sūrya with his usual attributes, attendants, charioteer and chariot-horses.[46] Here the Sun god is shown not only as inferior to Brāhmaṇical gods like Viṣṇu and Śiva but also to Buddha because the latter, though placed in the background, has been given the right side,[47] which is traditionally regarded as more important than the left one. The composition of *Hari-Hara* standing between the two wives reminds us of the verse describing *Pradyumneśvara* in the Deopara *praśasti* of Vijayasena. Similar verses in praise of *Hari-Hara* are also quoted in Śrīdhardāsa's *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta.* Repeated occurrence of such description in the epigraphy, literature and real art clearly demonstrates to what a low position was reduced the Sun god under the aggressive ascendancy of the two great cults.[48]

In the folk songs around the Sun god discovered from the district of Barisal in eastern Bengal,[49] he has been called Hari as well as Śiva. In the same folk ballads, Gauri is stated to be the Sun god's bride and a legend about Śrī Kṛṣṇa has also been interpolated. We find it stated that the god Śiva (i.e. the Sun god) adorned with flowers of *Dhutura* plant in his two ears, has started on his journey, and is going to Mathurā accompanied by sixteen hundred milk-maids (*"Śibāi ṭhākur yātrā kalle dui kāne dhuturo / ṣolaśata gopinī laye chaliclhe mathurā"*).[50] The reason for thus identifying the Sun deity with *Hari* (or Viṣṇu) and Śiva and connecting him with *Gauri* and *Gopīnīs* is not far to seek. It seems that the position of the Sun was gradually being usurped by the more dominant Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva cult.

Rivalry and Reverses of Sūrya

There existed many a religious sect, major or minor, in Bengal and rivalry among them was not quite unnatural. The enmity revealed itself mainly by way of representing other dominant god or gods as attendant or accessory figures of another ambitious cult-god or replacing some opponent deity from the Trinity. The Sun cult, especially spearheaded by the Maga Brāhmaṇas of foreign origin, could not have been an exception. In *Trimūrtis,* Sūrya as the principal god is not unknown as it is found in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Sūrya replaces Brahmā in the trinity in an inscribed sculpture of Bengal. There are many composite images at Ranapur, which may be taken[51] as of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Sūrya thus showing that Śiva has been replaced by Sūrya. Sūrya replaces Viṣṇu in the door lintel of the tenth century A.D. Śiva temple at Tejpur in Assam with Brahmā and Śiva on two sides. Śaṁkarācārya had to face the Sun worshippers in the Deccan, whom he found as divided into six sub-sects.

Enmity of the Śaivas, especially the *Pāśupatas* has been suggested[52] as one of the causes for the decline of the Sun cult under discussion. Even the *Mahābhārata*[53] goes to state: – "Meanwhile, Rudra of terrible prowess rushed against the celestials. Filled with anger he tore out the eyes of *Bhaga*" (*i.e.* Sūrya). "Excited with anger, he attacked *Pūṣan* (Sūrya) with his foot. He tore out the teeth of the god as he sat employed in eating the large sacrificial cake". It is not unnatural for the god Paśupati, the lord of beasts, to have fallen into conflict with *Pūṣan* who is intimately connected with cattle and pastoral life in the *Ṛgveda,*[54] with the prosperity of cattle in the later Vedic literature[55] and with the *Paṇis*[56] who were traders and most probably non-Āryans.[57] It is equally not unexpected of the god of the *Vrātyas* (outcastes) to have been angry with *Bhaga,* 'a distributor of wealth', usually the gift of Indra and Agni, and the chief leader of rites[58] and the sustainer of the world.[59]

The *Śaiva*s, particularly the Pāśupatas, were opposed to the solar cult and this must have checked its progress largely. The Pāśupata was the oldest form of Śaivism prevalent in north India. Varāhamihira refers to the *Pāśupata,* while prescribing the installation of images of different deities. He states, "The priests who install the image of Viṣṇu, should be *Bhāgavatas;* of Sun, Magas; of Śiva, the *Pāśupatas* (Ash-armed one).....". Śaivism in Bengal was of the *Pāśupata* sect, as is evident from the Bhagalpur grant of Nārāyaṇa pāla.[60] It is deserving of note that emanating from the South, the kings of the Sena dynasty were prominent devotees of Sadāśiva the concept of which, having been accepted in South India, in course of time spread to Bengal with the Southern dynasty and its army.[61] With the decline of Buddhism in the twelfth century A.D. Śaivism became predominant in Bengal. As a historical process, a highly antagonistic attitude of the *Pāśupatas* of Bengal against the Maga Brāhmaṇas whose sphere of influence also included a large body of the *Vrātyas* is easily comprehensible.

Sūrya Reduced to the Status of a *Graha*

It has already been seen that the worship of the *Navagrahas* became immensely popular in medieval time mainly among the Hindus, as a means to secure peace, prosperity and long life, avert misfortune and harm enemies. Constant fear of growing foreign invasion and prevailing socio-economic tensions might have contributed to this new phenomenon. The Sun worshipping Maga Brāhmaṇas who took to the profession of astrology upheld *Grahayāga* or *Svastyāyana* as a sole, infallible panacea for the problems confronting the society. In astrology, *Ravi* (Sūrya) is considered as one of the leading planets, determining the fortune of humankind. Introduction and popularization of *Navagraha* worship in such an energetic way, in reality, brought the Sun god down to the position of one of the planets only, though a central figure among them, from the loftiest seat of a great benevolent deity and the 'soul of all movable and immovable things'.[62] Independent worship of the Sun as a god naturally lost its rationale in the society. In absence of images of the nine planets in a single stone slab, they could be worshipped by drawing their figures on canvas in their respective colour or in *maṇḍalas* made of scented paste (Sandal-wood-paste). The present practice of *grahayajña* with no requirement of icon in any form, in all probability, was prevalent in the last phase of our period under discussion. Under the changed situation, there was left no urge before the people to do the individual and anthropomorphic worship of the once-great god Sūrya in temples, big or small. Anyway, the *Maga-dvijas* who introduced, popularized and took to the greatest height, the anthropomorphic and temple worship of the Sun god under a strong religious zeal, possibly under economic compulsion never hesitated to reduce the status of their deity.

Assimilation of Brāhmaṇical Religion and Solar Deity

The whole question concerning the decline of Sun worship in the so-called post-Hindu period originates from the occurrence of large number of Sun images and references to Sun temples belonging to the Pāla-Sena period against their conspicuous absence in the succeeding age. It is well known that the practice of Sun worship in anthropomorphic form and in temple was not at all an indigenous one, rather very much alien to the mainstream tradition. A critical study of the practices of the primitive tribes of India clearly shows the general absence of any material representation of the solar deity while the deity are being offered sacrifices in an open space cleared of jungle on a raised altar.[63] Even in different *Sūrya-vratas*, which have been performed by the womenfolk from time immemorial, the god is worshipped with the aid of symbolic representation. In the *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Upaniṣadas*, the *Sūtras* and the Epics, we notice the worship of the Sun god in both atmospheric and symbolic forms, especially among the orthodox section of the society.

Coming to the Paurāṇic age, we are amazed to find that many Purāṇas[64] even do not mention the role of the Magian priests at all and continue the indigenous and national tradition of Sun worship as found in the *Vedas*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Sūtras*, and the Epics. In the *Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Matsya Purāṇas*, which were thoroughly imbued with the orthodox spirit of the Sun cult, the Vedic tradition[65] of Sun worship is found to have been carried on. They reveal that the orthodox tradition of Sun worship actually developed on the lines of the *Śatapatha* Brāhmaṇa*'s*[66] prescription of a golden disc to represent the solar orb and the

Upaniṣadic[67] doctrine of the golden *Puruṣa* in the Sun who was identified with the Ultimate Being. The prevalence of this tradition even after the spread of the Magian custom is attested by the *Kūrma Purāṇa* which describes the Sun as the heavenly body in regulating time and seasons, in maintaining the planets in their position and in fostering the life of the plants and animals. This description is in conformity with the Vedic account of the Sun god. Even in the *Sāmba Purāṇa,*[68] which symbolizes the climax of the Magian belief, the Vedic tradition has not been forgotten. The *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* describing the various sects of Hinduism, states that some persons who knew the Vedas worshipped the Sun everyday in the morning, midday and in the evening with various hymns.[69,] This shows that among the Sauras was also a section, which continued worshipping him in the old Vedic way. Even a group of the Sun worshipping Magas[70] called Bhojakas (later on degraded as the Yājakas) who appear to have been indigenous priests of the Sun cult, are described as chanting Vedic *mantras* etc.[71] In view of the above, it is evident that even after the flood of Magian Sun worship in northern India, the indigenous form of Sun worship without image and temple had simultaneously been going on.

It is beyond doubt that in the field of iconography and temples, the Maga priests exerted powerful influence and this new tradition was materially helpful in propagating and diffusing the sectarian form of Sun worship. They gave material and lithic representation to the imaginary and atmospheric conception of the Sun as found in the *Vedas,* the Epics and the *Purāṇas.* However, as far as the mythology, theology and philosophy of the Sun cult were concerned, the Maga-influence was negligible.[72] As a means to wipe out the Magian element even in solar iconography, a constant, conscious and vigorous attempt was also being made in the form of hiding or idealizing the alien traits (northerner dress, waist-girdle and high boots) in the Sun images. This is evident from steady shedding off the northerner's dress by keeping the upper body of the divinity open (Harinarayanpur image) or covering it with a diaphanous garment, threatening instruction for not making the god's feet[73] and endowing him with Indian attributes such as *yajñopavīta, tilaka* etc.

The endeavour to merge the Sun cult with the Brāhmaṇical stream was slow but steady until the rule of the Buddhist Pālas because of their eclectic policy, though they were also the upholders of the Brāhmaṇical religion and social system. However, in the Sena period the wheels of the religion and society turned in the one direction; in this era the all-pervading and all-embracing religion of Bengal was Brāhmaṇism, governed by the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas,* the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti,* and affected by the *Tantras.* Further, from the second half of the eleventh century the descendants of the Buddhist kings also gradually took to Brāhmaṇism. By the end of the ancient period, the Brāhmaṇism of the Vedas, *Smṛti* and the *Purāṇas* had triumphed and the Sun god was ultimately assimilated into the Brāhmaṇical religion losing his identity in the Brāhmaṇical solar deity. This may find corroboration in Verse 1 of the Edilpur Copperplate of the Sena king Sūryasena (1206-1210 A.D.) where the Sun is described as "the friend of lotus beds, the source of deliverance of the three worlds withheld in the prison of darkness, and the wonderful bird of the tree of the *Vedas,* soaring high up on his two alternately expanding wings (*i.e.* the two fortnights), of which one is white and the other is black".[74]

Dharmaṭhākur Replaces Sūrya in Rāḍha

In ancient *Rāḍha* or modern West Bengal, we find the immense popularity of the worship of *Dharmarāj* or *Dharmaṭhākur* who has been identified in the *Śūnya Purāṇa*[75] and the *Dharmapūjā-vidhāna*[76] with the Sun god. It is interesting to note in this connection that from the late Mm. Haraprasad Sastri down to Ashutosh Bhattacharyya, it took us three generations to know finally that *Dharma-pūjā* belongs to the Sun cult.[77] Some solar attributes had definitely been absorbed in the personality of the *Dharmaṭhākur*. He is also conceived as the remover of diseases like Sūrya. It is not unlikely that the place of the Brāhmaṇical god Sūrya was gradually occupied by this folk god *Dharmaṭhākur* at least in some parts of Bengal. Given the authenticity of the *Śūnya Purāṇa* of Rāmāi Pandit, it can be accepted that *Dharma* festival was current in Sena times prior to the Turkish conquest. The local tradition of adoring the Sun god as *Dharma* was so widely accepted in western part of Bengal that it did not leave any opportunity for the *Udīcyveśī* Sūrya in Paurāṇic garb to gain popularity.[78]

It also appears that after the rule of *Parama-Saura* Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena, the solar devotees of the South-West Bengal, being deprived of state support, gradually assimilated themselves into other religious communities.[79]

Notes and References

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6. Bhattacharyya, Ashutosh, *op. cit.*, p.165.
7. Hazra, *Studies*, Vol. I, p. 30.
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21. Gosta, *op. cit.*, p.229.
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24. *HBP*, p. 422.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 450. For details, see P. Jash' 'The Cult of Radha-Krishna' in the book *History and Evolution of Vaishnavism in Eastern India,* Calcutta, 1982.
26. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj,* Bombay, 1955, pp.314 ff.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 323.
28. *SWAI-P*, p. 189.
29. Monier, Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India,* London, 1883, p. 412.
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34. *Agni P.*, Tr. by Manmath Nath Dutta, Vol. I. 120-33.
35. *Sāmba P.*, pp. 26; 37; 38.
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40. "*etasya dakṣiaṇadṣiśo vamśe mihrasya jātavān pūrvam vigrahapāla*": *E.I.*, II, p. 350; *Gaudalekhamala,* p.128; *C.B.I.*, p. 370.
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43. MacDonnell, *Vedic Mythology,* p. 93.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
45. Kantawala, S.G., *Cultural History from the Matsya Purāṇa,* Baroda, 1964, p. 185.
46. *ASI- AR,* Part II, 1930-34, pp. 256-257.
47. Incidentally, it deserves to be mentioned that much earlier Lord Buddha had been accepted as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, and it did not take very long for the acceptance to develop into affection. For details on the cult of Harihara, see P. Jash, *History of Śaivism,* Chap. II.
48. In the Sūrya image from Banshihari (West Dinajpur) in SAGC shows the miniature figure of Viṣṇu on the left side of the *prabhāvalī* and two defaced figures on the right. Two identical Sūrya images (*BSHI,* p.189, pl. 162) from Vikrampur (Dhaka) in the BNM (N0.61 & 66.31) show Brahmā, Maheśvara and Viṣṇu seated on the top of the *prabhāvalī.*
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APPENDIX - A

SUN TEMPLES IN EARLY BENGAL

Architecture is intimately connected with sculpture. While a piece of sculpture might be the creation of an individual's taste and interest, the temple demonstrates the will of the community thereby showing the religious condition of the period. The temples represent in concrete form the prevailing religious consciousness of the people[1].

Temples are considered as the symbolic representation of God. It is believed to help in promoting devotion and concentrating innate faith in the divine being. The building of a temple was regarded as a sacred act. It was meant to enhance one's fame and renown in this world and one's eligibility for a place in heaven. The rewards gained by the performance of sacrifices and public works were equal to the rewards which one attain by building a temple. "One wishing to enter the world attained by performing sacrifices and sinking wells and the like, should build a temple, whereby one should get the fruit of both."[2] "Throughout the ages, the Hindu temple has been built with fervour of devotion — the *bhakti* — as a work of offering and pious liberality in order to secure for the builder a place in heaven. The Hindu temple is a *tīrtha* made by art."[3]

There was no scope for a temple in the solar religion of the Vedic tradition as it centered round the worship of the atmospheric form of the Sun by means of oblations and libations in the sacred fire. Naturally, the Vedic literature is conspicuous by the absence of references to any temple in the proper sense of the term. However, terms indicative of the temple start occurring in the *Gṛhyasūtras*[4], which shows that by the fifth-fourth centuries B.C. the tradition of temples had been evolved in the Hindu society. The cult of *bhakti*, which inundated India after the 5th-4th centuries B.C., was responsible for the adoption of the temple-tradition.[5]

As regards the Sun cult, we do not find any reference to a temple of the Sun in the orthodox literature before the fifth-sixth century A.D. The earliest references to a Sun temple established by *Sāmba* at *Mūlasthāna* (modern Multan) are found in the Purāṇas.[6] The Magas are said in this legend to have built a city known as *Mūlasthāna* on the banks of river Candrabhāgā in Punjab and a Sun temple there containing image of that deity. The tradition of public worship of the Sun in temples was introduced in India by the Magas as is attested by the literary evidences.[7] From the archaeological evidences, it is clear that many temples with the Sun-icons may have been constructed in India under the influence of the Magi Priests.[8] The Purāṇas mentioned above also refer to other temples at Konark and Kālapriyā established by the Magas.[9] The temple of Multan may have been built in the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa period (second century B.C.— second century A.D.). If the testimony of Philostratos and Plutarch is to be believed, there may have been Sun temples in the kingdom of Porus[10] on the eve of Alexander's invasion (fourth century B.C.). In view of these evidences, it may be suggested that the tradition of temple for the Sun god may be as old as the fourth century B.C. and like other temples, they were made of perishable materials in the Maurya-Śuṅga period.

Many Gupta inscriptions also refer to Sun temples.[11] Thus, by the Gupta period the temple tradition came to be incorporated in the Sun cult by the orthodox Hindus also. However, it appears that the tradition of temple for the Sun god had come into existence much earlier among the masses under the combined impact of the Hellenized Mithraism and indigenous traditions. From the Gupta period onwards, the Sun temples also came to be built in bricks and stones. That is why we start getting archaeological evidences of Sun temples from the Gupta period onwards.[12]

The study of architecture of early Bengal, needless to mention, is a problem to the scholars because of an utter scarcity of material. Almost none of these early monuments now exist. The fact is rather intriguing because numerous inscriptions of the province, dating from the Gupta period, refer to temples and monasteries. Fahien in the sixth century A.D. and HiuenTsang in the seventh century A.D. saw a large number of temples and *stūpas* in different parts of Bengal. Dhoyī mentions many temples in Suhma dedicated to gods namely Viṣṇu (V. 28), Śiva (V. 29), Sun (V. 30) and *Ardhanārīśvara* (V. 30).[13] Innumerable images found in Bengal are sufficient evidences that in ancient Bengal there were temples for their proper enshrinement. However, the very few standing edifices and the ruined vestiges, brought to light in explorations, are too fragmentary to be of much real use for a detailed account of Sun temple, properly so called. All that is possible to do is to piece together every bit of information from such other sources as inscriptions, literary works, sculpture and extant monuments elsewhere, in order to reconstruct the history of the Sun temples of the province.

A cause for this almost obliteration may be sought for not only in the soft alluvial formation of the land and its damp climate, but also in the building materials. These last were usually mud, bamboo, reeds, wood and fragile but indigenous products. In Bengal, as in the rest of India, there was, no doubt, always a tendency to use permanent materials for religious edifices. However, even in the more pretentious buildings, the usual medium was brick, certainly a much less durable material than stone.[14] A brick structure, not to speak of the buildings in more perishable materials, cannot be expected to resist for long the effects of damp and relaxing climate, the excessive rainfall, and the luxuriant vegetation of the country. Stone was always very difficult to obtain in Bengal and had to be imported at great expenses from the quarry of Rājmahal Hills. Therefore, Bengal temples were almost entirely made of bricks and when left in neglect, their destruction was only a question.

Along with this natural cause, there was also the human element. Many temples that might have escaped decay because of the more durable nature of their materials were deliberately razed to the ground by foreign invaders because of their iconoclastic zeal. A few were converted by them into mosques or Dargahs.[15] Quite a large number of temples were demolished by the iconoclasts to secure building materials for constructing or decorating their own structures. Instances are not rare where earlier structures were thus utilized with but little transformations, as we have an example in the tomb of Jafar Khan Ghazi at Triveṇī in Hooghly.[16]

Sun images have been discovered more or less from most of the districts of early Bengal. Presumably, majority of these icons used to receive worship in temples, big or small. However, we have very scanty references to the shrines of the Sun god, and that too in favour of a few districts only.

Rajshāhi

The temple of the thousand-rayed god Sūrya referred to in the Jagadishpur copper plate (447 A.D.) from Rajshāhi District was established in the village named Gulmagandhikā adjacent to the Jaina Vihāra area included within *Puṇḍravardhanabhukti*.[17]

Malda

At a place called Madhaipur in the district of Malda, an image of the Sun god is found in a temple of goddess Kālī, which lies at a short distance from the present Malda Court Railway Station across the Mahānandā River. It is believed that an exclusive temple for the Sun existed here in olden days.[18] According to local scholars, there was a city named Sūryapur situated in the forest of Kaṭhāl in earlier times. At a place called Yogībhavan of this Sūryapur, is found a big Sun image in a temple. Madhaipur is known to have been once a Brāhmaṇa dominated area. Rāmapāla is also referred to have established at Rāmāvatī (Ramauti) a temple for the Sun god in addition to those for a few other Brāhmaṇical deities.[19]

Murshidabad

There is a Sun temple in the old settlement of Amṛtakuṇḍa or Amarkuṇḍa under Navagram Police Station, three miles from Rānidā, in the district of Murshidabad. This temple is popularly known as the '*Gaṅgādityer Mandir*'.[20] The god came to be known as *Gaṅgāditya* because of being installed in a temple on the bank of the River Ganges. He is the presiding deity of the Amarkuṇḍa village. It is learnt that the temple was built in 1307 - 1308 B.S. (1900-01) on an earlier temple-foundation.

Birbhum

There was probably a big temple of the Sun god in the *Rādhā* region, which is indirectly referred to in the Sian (Birbhum) Stone Inscription[21] (of approximately

1043 A.D. and belonging to the reign of Nayapāla). Grant of a *ratha* by the king for the Sun temple is indicated in Verse 17. Here we find a reference to something similar to a moving victory-pillar given by the king (*"Viśrāmārthamivaiṣa jaṁgam-jayastambho babhou yo'rpitaḥ'*). The term' *Viśrāmārtham*' probably indicates that when tired, the horses of the Sun' s chariot would rest for a while at the peak of the temple. Indirect reference is made to a big Sun temple too in another verse (No.46) because the shrine is thought to be the palace of the Sun god where he would stay by giving up the way to the heaven (*"yadīya ruchi lobhitaḥ sa bhagavānnābhaḥ pānthatāṁ tyājediti vichintayanniyatamāhi"*).

Bankura

On the bank of a small river Kumārī in the extreme southwestern corner of Bankura district[22] lies a temple for the Sun god, which has a standing figure of the Sun god carved on a large pedestal. There is also a Sun temple at Sonatapal (Onda) in the same district. This *rekha deul, i.e.* temple with curvilinear *śikhara* (tower) made of brick is one of excellent architectural heritage of the district. It is believd to have been established in the eleventh century A.D. The place where the temple is located was known as Hamirdanga in earlier times and still has a large number of the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas living nearby.[23]

Hooghly

There are many references to Sun temples in the District of Hooghly. Panduyā (Saptagrām) situated thirty-eight miles from Calcutta and now commonly known as Pedo, probably had a Sun temple.[24] Every year in the month of January and April fairs are held here in the honour of the Sun god. When Samsuddin Isuf Shah, a king of Gauḍa, conquered this place in the fifteenth Century A.D., the temple was converted into a mosque.[25] An Islamic inscription is found engraved in the lower portion of the backside of a stone slab containing a Sun image.[26] Triveṇī, situated at eight miles to the east of Mahānadī and at the short distance from Hooghly, was another place where probably a temple dedicated to the Sun god existed in ancient period. Dhoyī also refers to the same temple, while directing the messenger wind to salute the Sun god ('*Raghukulaguru*') and offer water to him on the bank of the river Ganges before departing from there.[27] Twelve figures of the god representing probably twelve different Ādityas have also been discovered from Triveṇī.[28] Probably, there was a splendid temple dedicated to them, which, later on, was destroyed by the Mohammedan invaders in the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D.[29]

Midnapore

No Sun temple is found in the Midnapore District. Nor any evidence that there existed any temple for this god ever in any parts of the district has been discovered so far.[30] The Pāla-Sena tradition had no abiding influence on temple architecture in this district almost the whole of which was under the territorial jurisdiction of ancient Orissa since the early medieval period.[31]

A Sun temple is also found close to the *Viṣṇupada* at Gayā, housing a Sun image with four hands.[32] Incidentally, mention may also be made of the Deo Sun-shrine, which is one of the ancient shrines of the country situated in Aurangabad district of Maghi cultural region of Bihar state and which is famous in the country for the performance of *Chaṭha Vrata,* which takes place twice in a year *i.e., Chaitra* and *Kārttika.* On *Chaṭha Vrata,* the greatest *Chhath fair* of the country takes place at Deo for a period of a week and nearly ten-twelve lakhs of people from different parts of Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, adjacent parts of Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal pay a visit to perform the Vrata of *Chaṭha.*[33]

Navagraha-shrines, though rare, have been discovered in other parts of India. The *Navagraha* temple of Gauhati, which is situated near the Kāmākhyā temple on the top of a beautiful hill, deserves mention[34]. The temple, which is surrounded by a big wall, consists of a large circular room where nine *grahas* are placed. The *Navagrahas* are represented here by nine cylindrical pieces of black stone, each one of which has been erected on a wide elevated base. The campus of the temple has a small rectangular pronaos where a *liṅga* is worshipped. Whether any temple for the nine planets had ever come up in early Bengal, especially in North and South-Western Bengal, which has presented us all the *Navagraha* images, is not certain.

The *Brahma Purāṇa* prescribes Sun worship for all the castes — *Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* — to get all the worldly and non-worldly pleasures.[33] No restriction on account of caste is imposed on Sun-worship in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* too.[36] Religious privileges were extended to women and men of lower castes by the Magas as well.[37] Deprived of the association of the higher Hindu society, these Scythian Brāhmaṇas sought to establish supremacy over the low-class untouchables.[38]

It is intresting to note that sun worship did not receive royal patronage in Bengal as elsewhere and the kings of this region had played no important role in the establishment of solar shrine excepting the following two cases. In keeping with our presumption, (i) the Pāla king Rāmapāla, son of Vigrahapāla III, is found to have established a temple for the Sun-deity at Rāmāvatī (Ramauti) along with those of Śiva, eleventh Rudra, Skanda and Gaṇapati.[39] The urge on the part of the king to please the people of different dominating cults in view of the recent Kaivarta rebellion,. which led to the seizure of the Pāla throne by the Kaivarta chief Divya followed by recovery under Rāmapāla, probably inspired him to take such a laudable eclectic step. (ii) The second is an indication, which is made of the grant of a *ratha* by a king for the Sun-temple, which presupposes the building of the solar shrine by the king.[40] Large number of Sun images in stone from different parts of early Bengal speak in favour of the existence of a good number of temple for the divinity. Perhaps most of these temples were built by the rich people[41] as well as the residents. According to the Jagadishpur copper plate (A.D. 447 A.D.), three residents of the Rajshāhi district — Kṣemārka, Bhoyila and Mahīdāsa — donated land in Gulmagandha for the construction of a Sun-temple.[42] Lands were also granted to the Brāhmaṇas to enable them to build up temples for different gods, as is revealed by several Gupta Inscriptions.[43]

An idea about the priests of the Sun temples comes from the puranic and the epigraphic sources. It is stated in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* that Sāmba, a son of *Kṛṣṇa,* brought the Magas from Śākadvīpa to appoint them as the priests of Sun temples. This is also corroborated by the Govindapur (Navada, Gayā) Stone Inscription[44] of 1137-38 A.D, composed by the poet Gaṅgādhara who belonged to a line of Maga Brāhmaṇa. Further, it is expressly laid down in the *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* (Ch. 59, V.19) that it was the Magas (the Indianized form of the Magi, the Sun worshipping priests of Irān) who were entitled to install ceremonially the images of Sūrya in temples.[45] Varāhamihira who lived in the Gupta period categorically says that when a king would construct a temple of the Sun, he would appoint Magi Brāhmaṇas for the worship of the deity.

It may be derived specifically from the Deo-Baranark (Shahabad district, Bihar) inscription that with the temple of the Sun god were associated the *Bhojakas* named Sūryamitra, Haṁśamitra, Ṛṣimitra and Durdharamitra. As suggested by Monier Williams,[44] the Bhojakas were the descendants of the Magas through the women of the Bhoja race. Varāhamihira[45] informs us "the Brāhmaṇa who knows very well the (astronomical and astrological) works and their meaning, is the first to eat the food (*Agrabhuk*) offered to the manes". The name Bhojaka seems to have been derived from their function of eating first on *Śrāddha* ceremony.

Bengal abounds in images of Sūrya belonging to the mediaeval and earlier periods. It is presumable that the descendants of Maga Brāhmaṇas settled in large numbers in this tract. The Brāhmaṇas who came to be known as *Ācāryas* in Bengal and were the main section of the Sauras, had images made for their use, which was worshipped by the general people for averting diseases and other evils.[48] Usually, they looked after the solar temples as priests and also actively pursued the profession of astrologers and averter of astral influences (*grahaśānti*).[49]

No Sun temples of great antiquity exist in Bengal. However, we get some idea about their general features from the close examination of some extant Sun temples in other parts of India as well as from the outlines of temples as appeared on Sun images. By a close study and analysis of these, the Sun temples of ancient Bengal, which all naturally belonged to the northern style of Indian architecture, may be divided into two distinct types according to the form of the roof over the sanctum. However, for a better understanding, it may not be irrelevant to add a few words about the distinct types of Bengal temples.

Ancient temples of Bengal have been classified into four distinct types :

(i) the *bhadra, pīḍa* or tiered type, in which the roof over the sanctum consists of a series of gradually receding tiered stages crowned by the usual finials including the *āmalaka*;

(ii) the *rekha* or the *śikhara* type is characterized by a high curvilinear tower and the usual crowning elements;

(iii) the tiered type is surmounted by a *stūpa*;

(iv) the tiered type is surmounted by a *śikhara*.

It should be noted, however, that structural examples of these different types, except those of the second, are very rare, if not unknown, especially so far as the last two are concerned. The first type may be seen as fully devolved in several images such as the images of Sūrya from Kuldia (24Parganas), Sūrya from Baria (Rajshāhi; Pl. 18b) etc. Here we find temples with trefoil arches supported on richly decorated pillars, the roofs being composed of an odd number of *pīḍas* (here sloping tiers), three or five, and the top surmounted by the *āmalaka* and the usual finials. The last tier occasionally shows rampant lions at the course. It may be safely presumed that the Sun temples in which the above and other Sūrya images were enshrined might have had forms and features as carved around the celestial figure.

A thorough inspection of a few existing Sun temples in other parts of India[51] also enlightens us about some other common characteristics of the Sun-temples with minor variations in details. The Sun temples face towards east. According to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, the entrance of a Sun temple should face the east if not possible, it should face the west. The *agnihotragṣha* (the house for the oblations to the fire) is an integral part of the Sun temples.[52] They have usually *pradakṣiṇa-mārga.* They give an impression of massiveness and largeness, though are of moderate dimensions. It is interesting to note that in spite of the Magian association with the Sun worship, no Irānian influence is visible in any of the Sun-temples, and the architecture is in keeping with the Indian tradition.

Sometimes the image of the Sun god was installed in a temple along with those of other Brāhmaṇical deities as well. It is not also rare that the shrine of other divinity, even belonging to heterodox cult, had been built up just beside or very close to the temple of Sūrya.[53] The temple of the god *Sahasraraśm*i was established at Gulmagandhikā adjacent to the Jaina Vihāra area in *Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti.* In close proximity of the extant temple of the Sun god and the lost shrines of Viṣṇu and Śiva on the bank of the Kumārī River (Bankura)[54] is found a huge tenth century A.D. standing image of the 23rd *Tīrthaṅkara* Pārśvanātha with the figures of 24 *Tīrthaṅkaras* carved on the background. These developments came to take place in early and particularly in late medieval Bengal either out of the growth of the *Pañcāyatana-pūjā* or of the social compulsion of harmonious co-existence for a better survival of the cults at stake.

As already seen, stone slabs with *Navagraha* images were used in the medieval temples as architectural pieces (*e.g.* in a panel on a doorframe, on lintels over the entrance doorway and sometimes on the *toraṇa* of a Sūrya temple) allegedly to ensure prosperity to their founders and to prevent any evil happening to the temples themselves. Whether they were placed in the Sun temples of Bengal, and if so, how is not definitely known as there is no old temple in this province with such a sculpture fixed in situ.

It is deserving of note that near the Sun temples[55] at Madhaipur (Malda) and Sonātapal (Bankura) Brāhmaṇa settlements, especially of Śākadvīpīs, are found to have existed, which seems to be quite natural in view of the Maga Brāhmaṇas forming the main section of the Sun worshippers. This sort of settlement might have been present in the neighborhood of a few other solar shrines as well.

The Sun temple of Pāṇḍuā or Pedo (Hooghly), now destroyed, has still two tanks, named Jarapukar and Pirpukar.[56] These two tanks are undoubtedly *Sūrya-kuṇḍas,* which are sacred to the devotees of the Sun god. The Sun temple of Modhera (Gujrat), one of the most splendid solar shrines of India, also has a *Sūrya-kuṇḍa* very near, which is now called Rāma-kuṇḍa.[57] The Sun temple of Deo in Aurangabad district (Bihar) has a *Sūrya-kuṇḍa* in the east,[58] which can accommodate 5,000 or more devotees at a time for the purpose of bathing and offering *arghya.* Even today, ritual of bathing is performed with a belief of cure from leprosy. According to *Vāyu Purāṇa,* Yājñavalkya and his pupils had their bath in the *Sūryakuṇḍa* to get rid of the sin of *Brahmahatyā,* worshipped the god *Vālukeśvara* (Sūrya) of twelve beams in the city of Vāyupur and merged themselves into the world of Sūrya *(Sūrya-maṇḍalam).*[59] The presence of a *Sūrya-kuṇḍa* became quite common in classical and mediaeval Hindu India[60] as an integral part of the Sun-temple complex. The *Ṛgveda* (10.142.8) emphasizes the need of digging ponds or tanks for having full-blown lotuses (*i.e.* a sun symbol standing for the creative force) besides for the supply of pure drinking water (*RV,* 9.110.5). It is said in the Great Epic that the digging of tanks is very agreeable and beneficial and is "gratifying" to Sūrya himself and rewarded are those who dig tanks.[61] In view of these facts, it is presumable that the Sun temples which were not situated on some riverbank, were, in all likelihood, endowed with *Sūrya-kuṇḍas.* Perhaps at least a few of the Sun temples were provided with *rathas* (Chariot) for the journey of the Sun god installed in the temple – a fact which may be surmised from the reference to grant of a *ratha* by the king for the god.[62]

We have already seen that most of the Sun temples in Bengal were built up on the bank of some or other river (Gaṅgā, Mahānandā and Kumārī etc.) and at least one has been provided with *Sūrya-kuṇḍas.* The presence of big and deep-water source like river or pond is quite significant. It has already been noticed in the legend of *Brahma-hatyā* and consequent Sun worship by Yājñavalkya and his pupils that it was enjoined for those guilty of sin to have a bath before going to worship the solar divinity. Sūrya has been worshipped from time immemorial for removal of diseases, especially leprosy inflicted because of some heinous act committed (cf. Sāmba and Mayūra legends). How could a bath be possible as a precondition of Sun worship in absence of sufficient water available nearby? There is also a long established custom to see the reflected image of the Sun in the water. Even at the folk level, a miniature pond is dug in the yard to have reflected image of the Sun in the water, on which the solar worship is to be performed.[63] In Sun worship by the Mal-Paharia tribe,[64] a brass pot of water with a mango-twig placed on it is thought to represent the seat of the Sun god. It, therefore, appears that the miniature pond or the brass-pot of water is nothing but an available substitute of *Sūrya-kuṇḍa,* which is very sacred to the Sun god. In addition, water happens to be the most important of the eight offerings to god Sūrya, others being *Kuśa*-grass, clarified butter, curd, honey, red *Karabī* flower and red sandal. Dhoyī in his *Pavana-dūta* (V. 30), directs the messenger wind to salute the solar divinity (*Raghukulaguru*) in the temple of Triveṇī on the bank of the river Ganges and offer water to him before departing from there. Water is also very much needed to quench the thirst caused by the heat of the Sun, a fact which probably became very much prominent in the minds of the builders of the Sun temples. Such a pressing necessity of water in Sun worship explains the location of the solar shrines on the riverbank or the digging of tanks within the complex of the temple.

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Appendix - B

SUN WORSHIP IN FOLK TRADITION

During the period of the revival of Hindu supremacy when the Sun-worshipping Magian were found to observe several distinct rites and customs of their own with which the Vedic Hindus had no ritualistic or cultural affinity, they became excommunicated from the higher Hindu society. Deprived of the association of this society, these Scythian Brāhmaṇas sought to establish supremacy over the low-class untouchables of society and it was from then that the solar worship became almost extinct in higher Hindu society.[1] Though solar worship has outwardly disappeared from the social rites of the Hindus, yet it has not clean gone out of the heart of society. The popular *vratas* such as *Māghamaṇḍala Vrata*, etc. are nothing but a popular phase of solar worship.

I

The *Vrata* literally means 'a vow to be observed by undergoing solemnly certain physical and mental discipline for attaining a desired result or object'. Women-folk in India were deprived for a long time of their religious rights and privileges as per injunctions of the *Smṛtis* or *Dharmaśāstras*. As a result, they used to satisfy their earnest desire for performing religious rites and rituals by taking part in the *Vratas*, which are mostly folk-rituals unrecognized in the sacred texts (*śāstras)*.

It is difficult to determine the antiquity of this form of folk-ritual that are practiced by women folk at different stages of their life. The *Vratas* in their primitive form seem to have been known to the aboriginal tribes and were later adopted in their sophisticated form by the women of the upper classes of the society. The process of extending recognition to the *Vratas* by the priestly class seems to have been long-drawn in character. However, in the *Matsya Purāṇa* Śiva is said to have explained the efficacy of some *Saura Vratas*, that is, rituals to be performed invoking the god Sūrya. An emphasis has been laid upon the performance of such rituals on the seventh day of the bright fortnight, especially in the Bengali month of *Māgha*. The Paurāṇic list include the *Vratas* like *Kalyāṇa Saptamī, Viśoka Saptamī, Phala Saptamī, Sarkarā Saptamī, Kamala Saptamī, Mandāra Saptamī* and *Śubha Saptamī*.[2] The term *Saptamī* seems to have signified the auspicious seventh day in the bright fortnight of a month, especially of *Māgha*. It may be considered in this connection that the first four and the last one of the *Vratas* mentioned above are prescribed for those who desire to be free from all diseases by an invocation to god Sūrya and a prayer for his beneficent farvour. As in the early Purāṇas, so also in the later Purāṇas *Vratas* find mention for the worship of Sūrya. In the *Bṛhaddharmma Purāṇa* (fourteenth century A.D.), for example, we find specific reference to the *Sūrya-vrata.* It would not be unreasonable to hold that the said *Purāṇa* has recorded the tradition of *Vrata* that had been in vogue for a long time. The *Purāṇas* also recommend the observance of vows or *Vratas* in honour of the Sun with such objectives as obtaining cure from disease, attainment of wealth etc.[3] It is noteworthy that no restriction on account of caste is imposed on Sun worship.[4] In addition to Paurāṇic references, we may also take into our consideration the results achieved by socio-cultural anthropologists through their researches. Their findings give us to understand different forms of *Vratas* prevalent in different parts of Bengal. The *Vratas* hardly required the use of any *mantra* or a disciplined way of worship. Those were mostly performed by the devotees with the aid of symbolic representation of the deity concerned and the traditional ballads and folklore handed down from generation to generation.

Māgha-Maṇḍala Vrata **:** Among the *Sūrya-vratas,* the *Māgha-Maṇḍala Vrata* is the most popular one, which the girls of East Bengal, Sylhet and Cachhar districts observe for years together before their marriage. The detailed description of this *vrata,* which has been given by Dr. N.K. Bhattashali, deserves to be cited in this connection:

> "The *Māgha-Maṇḍala Vrata* is performed by the Hindu girls from their early childhood. It often begins when they are as young as three or four years of age. It has to be continued for five years in succession and is performed every year in winter throughout the month of *Māgha.* The girls rise before the Sun appears on the horizon and repair to the *ghāṭ* of the nearest tank. They sit by the water's edge with flowers in their hands and begin to chant hymns in vernacular under the guidance of an elderly girl or woman. The hymns are mostly childish doggerel, but not devoid of beautiful sentiments. They describe the childhood of the Sun, his coming of age, his marriage, the birth of his son etc., and in them are skillfully interwoven the childish hopes and fears of the girl regarding her future wifehood and home, her fears of rivals and her hankering to be the centre of a prosperous household.

The hymns (a dialogue supposed to take place between the girl and the Sun) begin thus :

Arise, arise, Sun-nie dear, sparkling and fresh;
Alas, I cannot, I cannot, the mists will not let me.

On the inner courtyard of the home, a shallow circle is dug on the ground with a smaller circle to indicate the Sun to the east, and a semi-circle for the moon to the west. After the chants are finished, the girl returns home and completes observance by the chant of a short hymn, sung while sitting on the edge of the circle. A new circle has to be added each year and each has to be coloured differently by different tinted powders. When the five circles are at last completed, the final observance of eating certain forms of sweetmeat by the girl while sitting on the edge of the circles is performed. The residue of sweetmeat is thrown over her head to be scrambled for by the other girls present. Thus, the five years' observance comes to a close".[5] The *vrata* is usually found to begin on and from the very day, when the Sun passes into the summer solstice (*Karkatkranti*) after the period of its passage from Sagittarius to Capricon.[6] If the rites and rituals of the *Māgha-maṇḍala Vrata* is a little closely studied, it will be quite clear that it is merely a popular female edition of the solar worship of older days. It appears that the *vrata* has been designed mainly as a discipline in early rising in defiance of the cold weather, which is at its height in *Māgha*.

Itu-Pūjā : Among instances of folk-worship of the Sun in the Brāhmaṇical society in Bengal, mention should also be made of the *Itupūjā*.[7] Dr. J.N.Banerjea[8] thinks that in the worship of *Itu* lies hidden the Sun worship of the earlier period. In West Bengal, *Itupūjā* is performed by the women of every Hindu family on every Sunday beginning from the last day of the month of *Kārttika* to the last day of the month of *Agrahayāṇa* (November-December) according to the sanctions of Hindu *śāstras*. It has been pointed out by Chintaharan Chakraborty[9] that *Itu-pūjā* is more prevalent in West Bengal than *Māgha-Maṇḍala*.

It has been suggested that *Itu* has to be derived from *Mitu* that is Mitra or the Sun. That the Sun was not unknown by the name of *Mitra* is thought by some scholars to be evident from the performance of the *Vrata Mitra Saptamī* in some parts of Bengal in the month of *Agrahayāṇa*. However, no tradition of Mitra-worship has been preserved and there is no evidence that the Mitra cult did, at any time, become a popular form of religion.[10] On the other hand, both in the folk legends connected with worship of *Itu* and the Brāhmaṇic form given to this folk worship the deity is definitely mentioned as Sūrya.[11]

Four small earthen pots are placed on a big earthen cup filled with earth in which seeds of paddy, barley, wheat and cereals are put. These seeds germinate and shoot up in the course of the month as a small quantity of water is poured every Sunday on the earth. The four earthen pots are symbolical of the four seasons of which the Sun is the lord; the earthen cup filled with earth symbolizes the earth ruled over by the Sun. Devotees should forego hair oil, fish and meat on the day of worship. Flowers, *durvā*-grass, sandalwood paste, sesame, sun-dried rice, myrobolam and so forth are presented for the rites of worship. Bunches of paddy-crops and some bulbs of arum *(coloccasia)* are inserted into the earthen pot filled-up with water. When the officiating Brāhmaṇa priest begins to perform the rite and offers the *pūjā* offerings to the said pot, the females, maiden or married, recite some rhymed verses and legend connected with the Sun deity. These verses and legend describe how this worship came to be adopted by some persons in an extremely miserable plight and how they came to attain prosperity and happiness through it. When the period of worship ends, *sādh* (rice boiled in milk and cakes) is given to *Itu*. *Sādh* is a feminine term meaning *sīmāntonnayana*, one of the twelve purificatory rites prescribed in the *Gṛhyasūtras* and its use in this connection is characteristic. When the females have finished the recital of the legend, they chant a verse, which embodies the boons, and merits which they desire to obtain. The English rendering of the verse is as follows:

> "While I went to gather faggots, I heard the story (connected with the worship) of "*Itu*" the Sun-deity and returned home. If one hears it, what merits does one acquire thereby? A man who has got no wealth, gets wealth; a man who is sonless, is blest with son; the unmarried soon gets married, the helpless gets help from God; the blind man gets back his eyesight, and after death, the hearer of this legend goes to heaven."

The boons asked for by the observers of the *Itu-pūjā* are sufficiently and distinctly set forth in the verse, which is recited in connection therewith. The object of the *Itupūjā* is undoubtedly the attainment of domestic happiness. It is deserving of note that this worship is confined to women and requires no priest except on the last day of the worship and that it is performed only on Sundays in the month of *Agrahayāṇa.* The last fact is easily explained by the circumstance that Sunday is especially sacred to the Sun while the two other facts would clearly indicate that the worship is of folk origin. The worship of *Itu* is really in the nature of a *Vrata* and synchronizes with time when the winter paddy crop is harvested and seeds of cereals are sown. The manner of worship in which seeds of grains and cereals are put in a cup filled with earth and watered for a month and small pots placed on it as symbols of four seasons ruled over by the Sun, would indicate that the worship was, perhaps, in its origin a fertility rite based on the idea of mimetic magic.[12]

Sūryer Vrata

Besides the *Māgha-maṇḍala Vrata,* Sun worship is still extant in East Bengal in a different among the female-folk. It is known as *Sūryer Vrata.*[13] The rituals associated with this *Vrata* are as follows: On a certain Sunday of the light fortnight in the month of *Māgha,* an earthen altar is to be built in the courtyard. On the alter should be lighted immediately after the Sun-rise *ghṛta-pradīps* (lamps whose wicks are besmeared with clarified butter), whose number must correspond to that of the *Vrata* performers. After ablutions even before sunrise, the female worshippers stand facing the east with lighted lamps in their hands. They will then make obeisance to the Sun and commence singing songs in honour of the Sun with sounds of '*Ulu*', '*Ulū*'. The worshippers are not to sit down from sunrise to sunset; they may not partake of anything, not braid their hair or ease themselves. Those who will perform their *Vrata* in a sitting posture will not be allowed to stand up. At noon, the priest performs the worship of the Sun at the foot of the altar. The worshippers will finish their songs after sunset and break their fasts. They will then be allowed to put out the lights and sit down.

The people of Chittagong also perform the *Sūrya-Vrata*[14] on the last Sunday of the light lunar fortnight of the Bengali month of *Māgha* (January-February). The Brāhmaṇa priest is engaged to perform this rite of worship. It takes place on an elevated spot where the public fair is held every year on that fixed date. On the day of the worship, all the devotees, especially females, rise very early in the morning, go to an adjacent tank with brass water-pot and take baths therein. Each devotee fills up this pot with water and inserts a mango twig into it, and all utter cries of "*Ulu*" in a chorus. No such legend and verses as in the case of *Itu-pūjā* are recited in this Chittagong form of Sun worship. Retuning home with those pots in their hands, they keep them in such a place where the sunrays must fall upon the pots throughout the whole day to dry up gradually the water within the pot.[15] The gradual drying-up of water by the sun rays indicates the fulfillment of their heart's desires. If the sunrays do not fall upon the pots all the day long and dry up the water therein, the observers think that their cherished desires will not be fulfilled.

All the devotees fast whole day and go to the aforesaid fair. They each purchases a big funnel-shaped incense-pot, two sets of small earthen pots, saucers and lamps with lamp-stands. They take all those things and other *pūjā* offerings to the officiating priests who sit in a row. Flowers, *durbā*-grass, sandalwood paste, sesame, Sun-dried rice, myrobolam and so forth are presented for the rites of worship. It is not indispensably necessary to place upon an earthen saucer a water pot with a mango twig, some ears of paddy and bulbs of arum inserted thereinto, to which the *pūjā* offerings are presented. Each priest prepares those *pūjā* offerings, arranges them upon those earthen plates, burns incense, lights lamps and performs the rite. He presents one set of food-offerings to Viṣṇu, the preserver of the world, who is at first propitiated and another set to the Sun-deity.

Throughout the day of the *pūjā*, a sacrificial fire is kept burning, before which are placed the *pūjā* offerings brought by the devotees for dedication to the Sun deity. The site on which the *pūjā* as well as the fair is held is called by the people " *Sūrya-"Khala"*, the place for the worship of the Sun god. The great fair begins from the morning and closes with the sunset.

The only boon prayed for by the worshippers is that they might be cured of all ailments they might be suffering from at the time. This is done under the belief that the Sun god will cure them of their ailments. Quite analogous to this folk-rite of eastern Bengal is that which is performed in Bihar by persons who suffer from chronic diseases. They worship the Sun daily after taking their morning bath and read the *Sūrya Purāṇa*.

Sūrya Vrata is also enjoined in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*[16] for those who desire to get rid of all diseases and to acquire good health. It has been prescribed for the people belonging to all castes. There are different methods of observing the *Vrata*. According to a method prescribed, the worship of the Sun god is to be performed on the seventh day of the bright fortnight by the devotee. She observes restrain in her taking food on the sixth day and fasting on the seventh day and is allowed to take usual food on the eighth day. According to another method, the devotee may worship *Mārttaṇḍa* on Sundays, observing fast at night. Again, a devotee may also worship god *Bhāskara* on the day of *Saṁkrānti*-cum-Sunday uttering the name of *Āditya* and taking food once only at night. It is further prescribed that a devotee may concentrate upon the setting Sun and later feed the Brāhmaṇas with sweets for their satisfaction, herself taking only rice boiled in milk with sweet. The devotees of the Sun god are advised to repeat the *Ādityahṛdaya-mantra* on the seventh day of the bright fortnight in *Māgha*. The day should, of course, be a Sunday. After the repetition of the *mantra,* the devotee has to take holy bath, give donation, practice penance, perform sacrifice and observe fasting. The eight offerings to god Sūrya are said to be water with *Kuśa*-grass, clarified butter, curd, honey, red *Karabī* flower and red sandal. The offerings are to be made in pots made of clay or gold. In some places, the priests are found to officiate in the *Sūrya-Vrata*, preparing an offering on earthen plates, burning incense, lighting lamps and performing the rite on behalf of the *Vrata*-observers. The description of the *Vratas,* as given in different texts, seems to suggest that not only cure of diseases but also all possible desirable things in woman's life are prayed for after an invocation to the Sun god at the time of observing the *Vratas.*

Sūrya-Vrata in Sylhet

An instance of folk worship of the Sun is reported from Sylhet, Assam.[17] On a Sunday on the seventh day of the moon and on the last day of the month, worship of the Sun is performed on the reflected image of the Sun in the water in a miniature pond dug in the yard for the occasion. On Sundays in the month of *Māgha,* the worship is performed with great pomp. At that, the devotees remain standing the whole day and enjoy neither meal nor protection from sunshine. In the past, devotees used to take lamp in the hand and plunge themselves into water at sunrise. Standing in water naval deep, they would look towards the Sun, shifting the direction of their faces from east to west, as the Sun would move in its diurnal course. After the Sunset, the devotees would come out of the water to take their food. Only very lately, the devotees used to remain standing on the land at spot, looking towards the Sun with a lamp in a hand. Nowadays, however, the worshippers only abstain from sitting down and enjoying their meals and taking shelter in their house. Those who find difficulty even in this much, observe fasting only. However, even now the position of the wick-end of the lamp is shifted from east to southeast, south to south-west and west according to the course of the Sun in winter. The lamp is not kept now in the hands, but is placed near the pond in the yard for the *pūjā* purposes. Formerly both males and females would observe the solemn rite, but nowadays the males seldom do it. The Sun is believed to have no teeth. Therefore, his meal consists of rice and milk. After sunset, the females walk round the pond and sing songs until it is dark when they go and break fast. In almost every rite and worship, an '*arghya*' to the Sun is a sine qua non. '*Arghya*' is an offering of a mixture of grass, rice and water. It would appear, however that two kinds of observances, one Paurāṇic in origin and the other of folk origin should be distinguished. In Bankura and other parts of Western Bengal, offerings are made to *Dharam* to obtain his blessings for the crop of the season.[18]

The *Chungir Vrata*[19] is observed by the homemakers in East Bengal. On Sunday in the Bengali month of *Agrahayāṇa, durvā*-grasses put in a tube (*choṅgā*) of *nala* tree and bathed with milk are offered to the Sun god. The legend recited in this *vrata* is similar to that of the *Itu-pūjā* of West Bengal. Chintaharan Chakravarty[20] has referred to another *Sūrya-Vrata* known as *Dhākarī Vrata* performed by the aged women. Sun worship by the *Gṛha-Lakṣmī's* (homemakers) through recital of small legends is widely prevalent in the district of Midnapore as well.[21]

Rāldūrgār Vrata : The survival of the pre-Āryan Sun worship is also found in the folk ritual of the *Rāldūrgār Vrata.*[22] In addition, there are many folk rites prevailing, in which the tradition of popular solar worship may be traced.

Rathayātrā

Among the festivals connected with the worship of the Sun, *Rathayātrā, i. e.* the procession of the chariots of the Sun deity is described in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa.*[23] It originated with the aboriginal tribes, and in course of time came to be Aryanised.[24] The concept of the *Rathayātrā* as a solar festival was also held by the people of our country in earlier times. According to the geographers, an intimate connection could be traced between the *Rathayātrā* and the diurnal rotation of the Sun. The later *purāṇas* describe the method of performing annual worship (*saṁvatsarī pūjā*) and annual car-festival (*rathayātrā*) of the Sun with the use of Vedic and Paurāṇic *mantras* well as methods for the use of incense and other materials in *pūjā.*[25]

Saura literature of Bengal

In the folk literature of the middle ages in eastern Bengal, there is ample evidence to show that the cult of the Sun god was widely and strongly prevalent in that part of the country. A very realistic picture of the domestic life of Bengal has been portrayed through the ballad sung in honour of the Sun on the *Māgha-maṇḍala Vrata.* However, the solar ballad of the *Māgha-maṇḍalaVrata* is not the only evidence of solar literature of Bengal. In accordance with the conventional mode of the composition of *Maṅgala Kāvyas,* one or two *Sūrya Maṅgalas* containing coherent and compact stories were also composed in the name of the *Sūrya Thākura.* The stories narrated in them differ altogether from the story of the *Māgha-maṇḍala* legend.

The name of the earliest Bengali poet of *Sūrya Maṅgala* is Rāmjīvan Bhaṭṭācāryya Vidyābhuṣaṇa. He composed *Sūryer Pāñcālī* (or the legend connected with the ceremonial worship of the Sun god), in the Śaka year 1611 or 1709 A.D. This poem throws a flood of light on the cult of the Sun god in medieval eastern Bengal.[26] It concludes with the instructions: Whoever would worship the Sun god in this way would be always preserved by his deityship (from all harm). The medieval Bengali legend as found in this *Pāñcālī* bears a striking similarity to the one that is recited in connection with the ceremonial worship of the deity *Itu-Rā'la,* which is performed in eastern Bengal on Sunday following the day in the month of *Agrahayāṇa* (November-December).[27] From the *Sūryer Pāñcālī* we learn:

(a) that the worship of the Sun god was very popular in eastern Bengal during the seventeenth centuty A.D. and the preceding centuries of the Christian Era;

(b) that the people of the countryside worshipped this deity for obtaining the boons of happiness and prosperity; and

(c) that it was further believed that, if the consecrated water used in the worship of this god were sprinkled upon the bodies of dead men, they would come to life again.

In addition to *Sūryer Pāñcalī,* a little altered form of the story can be seen in another *Vrata* namely, *Karamādi Vrata* performed by the female folk of eastern Bengal. Hence, the story as written by Rāmjīvan is not also original. Its style and conception are vitiated by the conventionalism of later *Maṅgala Kāvyas.* Besides Rāmjīvan, another poet Kālidāsa by name is known to have composed *Sūrya Maṅgala* or *Sūrya's Pāñcālī.* He has spoken of himself as '*Dvija*' or Brāhmaṇa; nothing more can be known about him. He is supposed to have flourished in the eighteenth century A.D.

Thirteenth interesting folk-songs describing a few of the leading incidents in the career of the Sun god have been discovered in the district of Barisal in eastern Bengal.[28] From the number of archaic Bengali words and phrases used in these folk-ballads, they appear to be very old. Some scholars are of opinion that they were composed before the Paurāṇic age.[29] From an examination of these folk-ballads, it appears that during the Middle ages, the cult of the Sun god was very popular in the district of Barisal in eastern Bengal and that there songs or hymns used to be chanted in every Hindu household in connection with the ceremonial worship of this deity. It would appear from a few lines[30] that they are charms whereby the Sun is caused to come out of the sky and shine upon the earth below. The folk-ballad No. V undoubtedly proves the popularity and the widespread character of the cult of the Sun god, during the middle ages in eastern Bengal.[31] From this song, we learn that the sun deity was prayed to and propitiated by his votaries with the presentation of various kinds of offerings in order to make him shine forth upon this earth, for men cannot live without his life-giving beams. The deity accedes to their prayers, accepts their offerings, and, being propitiated thereby, he pours forth his beams upon the world below, as will appear from line 14 of this song that says, "Having received the worship (from his worshippers,) the boy Sun god looked all around (him)".

Devotion to the Sun can be traced in several nursery-rhymes in Bengal.[32] In lower Bengal, many nursery-rhymes are chanted by little on foggy or cloudy morning without knowing that they are thereby praying to the Sun god and imploring him to come out of the sky and shine upon the earth below as they are very much in need of the Sun's vivifying influences. Mention may be made of the nursery-rhymes no. 52 of Sarkar's collection,[33] which shows how the moon is represented therein as going to the Sun's place describing to the latter the miseries from which men and beast of mundane world are suffering for want of sunshine, and therefore, imploring him to come out of the sky and shine upon the earth below. Again in Nursery-rhyme no. 324 of the same collection, the Sun is prayed to shine upon the earth as well as upon the forest of plantain trees for the ripening of the bunches of plantains and is promised an umbrella to be erected over his head by way of thanks-giving for this boon conferred upon mankind. Again, in Nursery-rhyme no. 216 the Sun god is addressed as a 'maternal uncle' and prayed to shine upon the earth.

Worship of the Sun as *Dharmaṭhākura* : In Bankura and other parts of Western Bengal, offerings are made to *Dharma Thākura* with the object of obtaining his blessings for the crop of the season.[34] It appears that Sun was identified to some extent with the *Dharma* and worshipped as a folk god in rural Bengal in the Middle Ages.[35] Even now we may come across scroll painting of *paṭuā* in Birbhum illustrating full-sized portrait of *Dharma-rājā (ṭhākura)* and also explanatory verses traditionally preserved in it – 'Zama (Yama), son of the Sun'.[36] Whether this identification was responsible in some way for the alleged popularity of the Sun as a folk god in rural Bengal in the middle ages is not known.

Rāmāi Paṇḍit, the author of the famous Buddhist work *Śūnya Purāṇa*, laid down form and formulae of the worship of *Dharma*. According to him, Sūrya is to be mediated on as follows :

Maṇḍalaṁ vartulākāraṁ śūnyadehaṁ mahābalam/
Ekcakradharaṁ devaṁ taṁ Śūryaṁ praṇamyāham//[37]

That Sūrya drives in one-wheeled chariot is a Paurāṇic concept but *maṇḍalam, vartulākāram, śunyadeham* are epithets, which belong to the god *Dharma* who is often worshipped in a tortoise-shaped stone image. Such an image of *Dharma* is actually worshipped at the *Sarvamaṅgala* temple at Burdwan town as Sūrya. It is reported that this worship has continued for the last 250 years.[38] Investigation into cases of Sun worship among Hinduised tribes and tribal peoples reveal interesting facts. A number of tribes identify the Sun with *Dharma* and offer him unorthodox sacrifices. If it is assumed that these tribes are remnants of the Buddhist population the source of this particular worship may be traced back to the Middle ages.[39] The object of worship is mainly agricultural, in some cases it is for obtaining offspring.

II

A critical study of the practices of the primitive tribes of Bengal may also throw valuable light on the Sun worship in Bengal. Tylor[40] has shown that Sun worship had been a very widely prevalent phenomenon among the primitive tribes of the world and such instances are not absent in India too. The Sun is the greatest object of reverence and worship for a number of tribes inhabiting the eastern portion of this vast sub-continent of India. Generally, it is not the *physical* Sun who is so much adored and worshipped. It is the *indwelling spirit* of this bright orbit, which is the object of so much regard and adoration.[41]

Santals are the majority among the *Ādivāsīs* of Bengal. Their religious system is headed by the great Sun-god *Sing Bonga*[42] or *Chando*. They worship the Sun as the highest spirit who has his allotted place in the *Jahirthān* or sacred grove.[43] Chando or *Sing Bonga* eats chickens and once in four or five years a feast in his honour is held. He protects from all dangers and never harasses anyone. He is worshipped at the *'Jom Sim'* festival. '*Monreko Turuiko*' is invoked in plural number, but actually he is a single God. He is worshipped to have good rain, good harvest and good health. Among the Santals, the sacrifice is placed on an open space where the rays of the rising Sun may fall upon the offerings. The Santals sometime swear in the name of '*Sing Bonga*'. In a paper,[44] Rev. P. O. Bodding provides us with an instance of the Santal belief. Says he, "A common practice for all three sects (of the Kharwar Santals) is that they worship *Ram Chando*. Rāma is a Hindu deity; *Chando* is Santali for Sun, but used about the God of the Universe, who is confounded with the Sun". It is a case of mere confusion. There are sufficient evidences to prove the existence of a wide spread idea among the primitive tribes of eastern India that the Sun is the supreme god of the universe. Referring again to the Kharwar Santals Rev. Bodding writes, "Their women every morning plaster a small circular spot with cow dung in the middle of the courtyard and at the entrance from the village street. They take care not to be seen during this operation. This plastered bit symbolizes the Sun. Some of their women have taken up the habit of lighting a lamp every evening after sunset, and they worship with this in their hand turning to the four corners of the world."

Oraons form the second largest of the tribal communities in Bengal. According to Father Dehon,[45] the Oraons worship a supreme god who is known as *Dharmesh.* A white cock is offered to him in times of calamity when prayers to other gods have failed. This *Dharmesh* is no other than the Sun god[46] — "*Sing Bonga"* of the Santals and the Mundas and *"Boram"* of the Bhuiyas and the Kharias. Curiously, Hopkins and others[47] write that the Oraons, though recognizing a supreme deity in the Sun, do not pray him because he does no harm.

The ***Bhumij*** people mostly follow the Hindu religion. It has been noticed that they were attracted towards Hindu Gods and Goddesses because of their long association with the Hindus. However, there are many[48] who still worship the Sun under the name of *Sing-Bonga* and *Dharam* "as the giver of harvests to men and the cause of all changes of seasons affecting their agricultural fortunes".[49] *Sing Bonga* is the chief deity of most Austric tribes.

The ***Mundas***[50] also place the Sun god *Sing Bonga* at the head of their pantheon. In every occasion, they worship him. They believe that *Sing Bonga* created this world, and he only can save them from all dangers. Generally, white goats and white cocks are sacrificed in his name. The priest '*Pāhān*' generally offers worship in the name of different deities.

The ***Mahalis*** are the worshippers of *Surji Devī. Sing Bonga* or the Sun God[51] is their '*Surji Devī*' who is worshipped in *Baiśākha* (April-May). At that time, they sacrifice kids, chickens and pigeons in the name of '*Surji Devī*' in '*Jāherthān*' or the shrine. The Mahali priest does all the rituals. After the worship is over, they cook the offered meat and take the meal together. The females also can eat that meat and take equal part in the arrangements. Generally, after every 12 years the Mahalis worship '*Surji Devī*' for the welfare of the village.

The ***Mal-Paharias***[52] has the Sun as their supreme god and names him as *Gosāin.* He is worshipped on occasional Sundays "by the head of the family who must prepare himself for the special rite by eating no salt on the previous day and fasting all Saturdays. Before Sunrise on Sunday morning, a new earthen vessel, a new basket, some rice, oil, areca nuts and vermilion and a brass *loṭā* (pot) of water with a mango-twig placed on it[53] are laid out on a clean space of ground in front of the house. The worshipper shows these offerings to the rising Sun and prays addressing him as *'Gosāin'*. This rice is then given to a goat, which is decapitated while eating, by a single blow from behind.

The ***Kharias***[54] worship the Sun god as creator and preserver. An anthill[55] in an open space is the altar on which the Kharias place their offerings for the solar deity.

Passing on to the ***Gonds,***[56] we find the names *Bura Deo, Bada Deo, Suraj Deo* or *Badial pen* used to indicate their supreme deity, the Sun-god. In the hilly tracts, he is worshipped under the name of *Rayatal.*[57] On a special day, all the male adults proceed to the forest and set up the altar of *Bura Deo* underneath an *Asan* tree. Next, a symbol of the god is placed on it before which sacrifices take place. The Gonds[58] used to worship a representation of the Sun by means of human sacrifices. It used to be in the nature of a feast in which are combined fertility rites as well.

The *Asuras*[59] also pay their reverence to the Sun as their chief god. The *Hos* regard *Sing Bonga*[60] otherwise known as *"Ote Boram"* as the chief god of their tribe, who created the earth and filled it with all sorts of life. Many compare Him with the Sun. In every celebration, *Sing Bonga* is worshipped. Just after the baby is born, the father sacrifices a chicken in the name of *Sing Bonga.* The *Garos*[61] also pay reverence to the Sun-deity. However, the nature of the god shows a good deal of difference. The Sun deity is no longer a *supreme god* and has lost his dignified position. The ***Korwas***[62] and some other smaller tribes worship the Sun as their chief god. An anthill in an open space is the altar on which the Korwas place their offerings for the solar deity. The Chief God of the ***Birhors*** is *Sing Bonga* or the Sun God[63] who protects from all dangers. They believe that *Sing Bonga* created this earth and he punishes the bad. He is compared to the bright rays of the Sun. They offer white chicken and white goat facing eastward, while worshipping *Sing Bonga.*

The *Khonds*[64] worship the Sun as their supreme god under the name of *Penu* (the god of light) or *Bella Penu (*the Sun god). They had a belief in one supreme God, 'a theism embracing polytheism' and other notions, which have been abstracted from their worship of the Sun as the great god. The light or the Sun god created a wife – Tari, the goddess of earth, the originator of all the ills that befell humanity[65] while the Sun god is a good god. Tari tried to prevent *Bella Pennu* — the Sun god from creating man. However, he created man. The dark-goddess Tari sowed the seed of sin in man and Death came to them. The Sun god was victorious while others say that Tari continues the struggle. There are four kinds of fate of man after death. One of this is that the soul goes to the Sun. It is similar to the belief of the Āryans that the Sun is the home of the dead. The chief feast to the Sun god is *Salo-Katho,* which is something like the *Soma*-feast. Since it is held at harvest time, Sun worship appears to have been connected with harvest and fertility. It is something like the *Pongal* festival of south India.

The names, by which the Sun god is addressed amongst the tribe described above, may be classified into two groups, *viz., Sing Bonga* and *Boram.* The group of tribes which uses the former name of *Sing Bonga* has no other variant for it. However, the name *Boram* has a good number of variants, all of which can be recognised as derived from it. The variants generally are *Bero, Bedo, Buda, Biru, Bella, Bada, Badial,* etc.

Amongst all the tribes named above, there is one common feature of the concept of the Sun god. It is the beneficent but innocuous nature of this supreme god — the Sun-deity. The deity who is the chief of all the gods or spirits and who is always beneficently disposed towards his devotees is completely helpless in the hands of the mischievous minor godlings (which are in most cases his own creations) in matters of defending his poor worshippers on the earth. Another common feature is the supreme necessity of a *clear open space* on which the Sun may shine freely without any obstruction. The usefulness of this custom is apparent from the Mal-Paharia system where the falling of the Sun's rays on the articles offered is a necessity. This also perhaps explains similar customs of making offerings to the Sun in the open-air by the rural people of Bengal in many of their *vratas* performed for the blessings of the Sun god *(e.g., Sūryavrata, Tapavrata, Itu-pūjā).* A peculiar feature of Sun worship among all these tribes is the general absence of any material representation of the deity. The sacrifices are offered to him in an open space cleared of jungle where an altar is raised.

Coming to the articles[66] offered to the Sun, we find very important and interesting characteristics. As a rule, all the tribes mentioned above offer animal sacrifices to the Sun, which consist of fowls, goats, pigs, buffaloes and others. There is a wide prevalence of offering *white coloured animals* or *birds* to the Sun god. In the month of August when the *Gora* rice ripens, the first fruits of the year are offered to *Sing Bonga* by the Hos. The offering remains to be incomplete without the sacrifice of a white cock, which is offered at the same time. The Mundas worship *Sing Bonga* in times of great distress with the sacrifice of a white fowl. According to Father Dehon, a white cock is offered to *Dharmesh,* the Sun god, in times of misfortune when prayers to other gods have been fruitless.

The facts mentioned above clearly indicate that at some remote past there had been a group of people living in this part of eastern India, who were ardent worshippers of the Sun god. With them the Sun-deity was a powerful god, the distributor of good and evil, the source of life and prosperity, the bestower of happiness and misery both in this and in the next world. This once active and powerful god has now, in a new environment, lost his former power, though retaining the prestige.

III

The *Chaṭha* festival[67] is dedicated to the worship of the Sun and considered to be a means to thank the *sun* for bestowing the bounties of life in earth and fulfilling particular wishes. According to traditions, *Chaṭha Vrata* occupies most significant place among all *Vratas* sacred to the Sun-God. Though unique to *Bihar* and *Jharkhand* in India and *Terai* in Nepal, it is also celebrated in West Bengal. It is an ancient and major festival.

The *Vrata* of *Chaṭha* is held twice a year: once in the summer (May-July), called the *Chaiti Chhaṭha,* and once in the winter (September-November) six days after Deepawali, called the *Kārtika Chhaṭha.* The latter is more popular because *Chhaṭha* being an arduous observance, requiring the worshippers to fast without water for more than 24 hours, is easier to undertake in the Indian winters. The festival begins on the sixth day of the *Hindu lunar month* of *Kārtika* (October-November). This *Vrata* is performed in a period of four days in both months. The *Vrata* begins on the 4th day and ends on the seventh day of bright of half both months. The *Vrata* is held in four days. But the *Tithi Chaṭhī* or *Ṣaṣṭhī* (6th bright half) is regarded as the most auspicious day of the *Vrata.* The *Vrata* is, therefore, designated as *Chaṭhī* or *Ṣaṣṭhī* (literary meaning sixth). Sun God being the venerable deity of the *Vrata,* it is also described as *'Sūrya-Chaṭhī'* or *Ravi-Ṣaṣṭhī Vrata*'. Traditions reveal that all *Tithis* are regarded as wives of Sun God and among fifteen *Tithis, Tithi Chaṭhī* or *Ṣaṣṭhī* is honoured as *Chaṭhī Maia.* Though childless, she is the bosom friend of women and protector of children. *Chaṭhī Pūjā* is a ritual bathing festival that follows a period of abstinence and ritual segregation of the worshiper from the main household for four days. During this period, the worshiper observes ritual purity, and sleeps on the floor on a single blanket.

The main worshipers, called *Parvaitin,* are usually women. However, a large number of men also are the main worshiper. The *parvaitin* pray for the well-being of their family, for prosperity and offspring. They usually can perform *Chaṭhī* only if it is passed on to them from their older generation. However, once they decide to do it, it becomes their duty to perform it every year, the festival being skipped only if there happens to be a death in the family that year.

On the eve of *Chaṭha,* houses are scrupulously cleaned and so are the surroundings. On the first day of the festival, the worshiper cooks a traditional vegetarian meal and offers it to the Sun God. The worshiper allows herself/himself only one meal on this day from the preparation. On the second day, a special ritual, called Kharṇā, is performed in the evening after Sun is down. On this day also, the worshiper eats his/her only meal from the offerings (Prasāda) made to the Sun God in this ritual. Friends and family are invited to the household on this day to share the prashad of the ritual. The evening of the next day, the entire household accompanies the worshiper to a ritual bathing and worship of the Sun God, usually on the bank of a river or a common large water body. Women hold special prayers for the welfare and prosperity of their families by performing a ritual in which they stand waist-deep in water and offer fruits and flowers to sun. From this day onwards, for the next 36 hours, the worshiper goes on a fast without water. On the last day everyone goes to the bank of the river, carrying plate full of fruits meant as offering to the Sun God. When Sun God rises, they look at and offer him milk, water and other offerings in plates. It is a gesture of thanks giving and also seeking the blessings from the forces of nature, mainly the Sun God; the river is the core of the festival.

One of the legendary stories is that Lord Rāma on completion of fourteen years of penance in the forest returns with his wife Jānakī to Ayodhyā to be crowned as a king. Lord Rāma prays to the Sun God to bless the couple with a prodigious son. As a result they were blessed with twins named Lūv and Kuśa.

Ritual rendition of regional folk songs, carried on through oral transmission from mothers and mothers-in-law to daughters and daughters-in-law, are sung on this occasion. In *Chhath-Geet,* description about *Chaṭhī Maiyā* or *Ṣaṣṭhī Māi* appears. The folk songs sung on the eve of *Chaṭha* mirror the culture, social structure, mythology and history of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. *Chaṭha* is also an eco-friendly festival as only unprocessed natural products are used in it as *pūjā* material.

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51. Baskey, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
52. Das, *op. cit*, pp. 89, 91; Risley, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.70.
53. This is thought to represent the seat of the Sun god. This may be a rude imitation of the Hindu *pūrṇa-kumbha* required in all sorts of sacred ceremonies, religious or social.
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APPENDIX - C

EXTRACTS FROM INSCRIPTIONS ON SUN IMAGES

1. Mahisantosh Sūrya-image inscription of the Fifteenth regnal year (=899 A.D. of Mahendrapāla (Pratihāra),

Text: Line 1: *Om* (I) *Samvat 15 Mārga-śukla-saptamyāḥ śrī Mahendra*
pāladeva-vījayarājye Viṣṇu na-
Line 2: *ndī-naptā Gaṅgānandī-sunū Lokanandīnā Āditya-*
bhaṭṭārakaḥ kārita (I)
Iti khanaka Vīdu (dyu) ta (II)

Eng. Trans: Hail (Ye Lord). On the seventh day of the bright half of the month of *Mārgaśirṣa, i.e. Agrahayāṇa,* (appertaining to) the fifteenth victorious regnal year of (king) Śrī Mahendrapāladeva, (an) image of Lord Āditya (Sūrya) was carved or done by one Loka Nandī, grandson of Viṣṇu Nandī and son of Gaṅga Nandī. Thus, (says) the engraver Vidyuta.

Ref.: Sircar, D.C., 'Mahisantosh Image inscription of Mahendrapāla (Pratihāra), Year 15', *EI,* Vol. XXXVII, 1968, pp. 204-208; Mukherjee, S.C., *Indian Museum Bulletin,* January 1967, pp. 44-45 and plates.

2. Inscription (c. 10th century A.D.) on a Sūrya-image (British Museum)

"Om Indranīlamaṇiśiśvhyaḥ śilāya
buddhiśālināḥ, ghaṭitāṁ kṛtajñena amṣteṇa suśilpinā"

Eng. Trans.: The image has been carved in stone by the wise, grateful, and good artist 'Amṛta', pupil of Indranīlamaṇi

Ref.: Chanda, R.P., *Medieval Indian Sculpture in the British Museum,* London, 1934, p. 66.

3. Kulkudi (P.S. Gosānihāt, Dt. Faridpur) Sun god Image Inscription of Govindacandra – year 12 (c. 1032 A.D.)

1. *Śrī Lakṣmīdīna-kārita-Bhaṭṭārakaḥ*
2. *Śrī Śrī Govindacandradeva pādīya*
3. *samvat 12 phālguna*

4. dine 19

Eng. Trans.: (This is the image of) of the Sun god, caused to be made by the illustrious Lakṣmīdīna. The year 12 is of the exalted Govindacandradeva. The 19th day of *Phālguna.*

Ref.: Bhattashali, N. K., *EI*, Vol. 27, 1947-48, pp. 25-26, plate opposite p. 25; Sircar, D. C., *Bhāratavarṣa*, *Chaitra*, 1348 B. S., p. 397.

4. Bairhāṭṭā Sūrya image inscription (*c.* 11th/12th Century A.D)

"Om Śrīmad Vaktraśivācārya kārita bhāti kāmadaḥ
Sūryaḥ samasta-rogāṇāṁ harttā Viśva-prakāśakaḥ"

Eng. Trans.: (This image of) the Sun, who bestows splendour and fulfils desires, removes all diseases and illumines the universe, has been made by the Master the Vaktrṛiva".

Ref.: Majumdar, N. G., *ASIAR*, 1930-34, p. 257 (Pl. CXXVII, C); *HB-I*, p. 456; *DHI*, p. 440; *SWAI-P*, p. 293, No. 16.

5. Nahapara (Dacca) Sūrya Image Inscription (*c.* 12th century A.D.)

"*āubhacīttadāsasya*"

Eng. Trans.: (The image was dedicated by) Śubhacitta Dāsa.

Ref.: *IBBS*, p. 170.

6. Fragmentary record of Viśvarūpa

'Jāgartti vasminudite prayāti
chātantu śete janatā samastā /
Trailokyadīpaṁ tamanantamūrttim.
abhyāhatābhaṁ śaraṇaṁ prayāti'//

Eng. Trans.: "I take shelter to this all pervading image who is the lamp of this universe (*anantamūrtti*) who having risen rouses the whole world from slumber and having taking adieu keeps them to their bed."

Ref.: *El, Vol.* XXXVI, p. 88; Chatterjee, Rama, *Religion of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1985, p. 213.

7. Rajganj (district Jalpaiguri) Sun god Image Inscription (*c.* 12th century A.D.)

"Om Svasti śrī-Śiva-devādityaḥ"

Eng. Trans.:- (This image of) Āditya was dedicated by Śivadeva.

Ref.: Bhattacharya, P.K., Indian History Congress, *Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Session*, Utkal University, Bhuvaneswar, 1977, pp. 790-791

8. Rajshāhi Sūrya Image Inscription (*c.* 12th century A.D.)

"*Om Amitas (ś) ilpīkena pratimā ghaṭitaḥ Om Taraṇiśammya (Taraṇīsasya*"

Eng. Trans.:- "This image was made by the craftsman Amita of Taraṅśa" (?.)

Ref.: *SVRM*, p. 241/605 (VRM no. 177).

REŚUMÉ

The entire exercise so far made in the preceding chapters has provided a scope to understand the uniqueness of Sun worship in *Prācyadeśa* (Eastern India) highlighting ancient Bengal in the backdrop of general ambience. Such an attempt has definitely helped to understand the history of an important cult in India in general and in Bengal in particular. To put in a different way, the study of the solar cult enables us to appreciate the history of this religious culture of early Bengal through evaluating the complex undercurrent behind its gradual rise and decline against a wider landscape.

The worship of the Sun as the Supreme reality existed in Bengal at least since the later Vedic period among a few of her dominant tribes like the Puṇḍras and Suhmas. It was no less popular in the pre-Gupta period as well. Profound knowledge of the Vedic Brāhmaṇism was not altogether lacking in ancient Vaṅga. Of the Brāhmaṇical gods and goddesses widely worshipped there, Sūrya happened to be one of them. It seems that the Irānian Mages were not responsible for the introduction of the Sun images in India because there was an indigenous tradition of showing the Sun deity riding on a chariot drawn by horses. The early indigenous tradition of anthropomorphic Sūrya may be traced in some terracotta plaques of the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period found in different parts of Bengal. A terracotta from Tamluk (second century B.C.) represents a standing winged figure with full-blossomed lotus in hands and cluster of plantains on either side of the stela and a pitcher-like object with ears of corn. The association of wings with Sūrya originally occurs in the *Ṛgveda.* Lotus standing for the creative force symbolized the Sun since early times. The plantain tree is also traditionally connected with the Sun worship. No doubt, the winged figure depicts the Vedic Sun god at its embryonic stage of iconic development. A good number of such winged figures have been discovered in different parts of ancient Vaṅga. Thus, Sun worship was not only introduced in early Vaṅga during the post-Mauryan and pre-Gupta period under strong Brāhmaṇical influence but was also quite prominent. Further, the worship of the Sun god developed in ancient Vaṅga along an indigenous line in which the solar deity appeared in the form of a winged divinity.

Another terracotta figurine of the end of the pre-Christian or the early century of the Christian era from Chandraketugarh (24 Parganas) shows the Sun god seated on the four-horsed chariot driven by Aurṇa and flanked by Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā. According to Cunningham, the four horses resemble the representation of Helios –

the Greek Sun god. The Greek influence in the Sun image of Bengal does not seem to be unexpected in view of the discovery of the images of foreign deities like the Roman god Janus and Athena in early Vaṅga in the pre-Gupta era. This resemblance is, however, superficial because the features of the Sun god along with Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā and the chariot are very much Indian. Though largely resembling with many features of the Bodh-Gayā, Bhājā, Lālā Bhagat or Anantagumphā Sun images, the Chandraketugarh terracotta Sūrya figures as an independent deity along with attendants and thus seems to have been object of worship with utmost devotion. On the contrary, those four images of Sūrya are accessory decorative figures in the religious architecture of the heterodox or other Brāhmaṇical sects. In addition, the relief in question reveals the element of the *bhakti* cult that was very much present in the country in the pre-Gupta period.

The northerner's dress — tunic and boots - first occur in solar iconography in ancient Vaṅga in a beautiful terracotta seal of first century A.D. from Hadipur (North 24 Parganas). In this dress, we can visualize the advent of the Irānian Sūrya in early Vaṅga. The new re-orientation could take place only when the *udichya* (northerner) type of Sun icons was introduced in Bengal by its new settlers who had brought the Maga priests and when the vigorous participation and assistance of these Brāhamaṇas was available. Inerestingly, the Magian tradition in making Sun images in ancient Vaṅga continued to be the major guiding force in its later representations. The aniconic representation of the Sun god and its worship probably prevailed in this age as well. The concept of Sūrya pillar does not seem to have been unknown to Bengal artists in the third/fourth century A.D. The Sun god seems to have been immensely popular like Indra and Agni in ancient Vaṅga, possibly among the various strata of the society during the post-Mauryan and pre-Gupta period, as contemporary images of the god, though in terracotta, are widely available in lower West Bengal. In an agrarian society, Sun worship could not have been of lesser importance.

During the Gupta rule in Bengal, the image-worship of the deity in ancient Vaṅga was further spread in Greater Bengal and consolidated on a firm foundation. With the new settlement of Brāhmaṇas, the cult of Vedic Sun god Savitā was brought in along with their daily programme of rituals and prayers. The earliest epigraphic reference to Sun worship in Bengal and that too in a temple occurs in the Jagadishpur (Rajshāhi) copper plate (447 A.D.). Here the temple construction and the solar worship by means of the oblations of rice, milk, sugar, perfume, incense, lamp etc. is done by the native peoples – probably the Vaiśyas. Besides the Irānian Magas, the Indians of even orthodox tradition also followed the practices of the anthropomorphic and temple worship of the Sun. Thus, by the middle of the fifth century A.D. there came into existence a developed Sun-sect with all the paraphernalia of a shrine, icons, priesthood, rites and procedures. It is of utmost significance that among the inscriptions referring to Sun worship in India, the Jagadishpur copper plate (447 A.D.) happens to be the earliest one. This is a clear indication of immense popularity of Sun worship in ancient Bengal along with a deep root of the tradition of Sun image and temple in the religious concept of the people.

The Gupta Age heralded a new epoch in the history of Indian art and architecture. The artistic talent of the age found its expression in different forms and shapes to the temples and shrines. Next to architecture, it was, in fact, in sculpture that the creative spirit of the Gupta artists found its best expression. The Gupta sculpture had outgrown the foreign influences and attained an unprecedented excellence in the indigenous style. The relics of the sun images in Bengal and its neighbouring regions from the Gupta period onwards bear these artistic traits. Traces of an amalgamation of indigenous and foreign traits in artistic representation are found profusely in solar divinities. It is thus known that from the Gupta period, the worship of the Sun of a purely northern culture (combination of Indian and form forms) became very widespread in Bengal. By this time, the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas seem to have spread all over this region. The earliest Sun images in India belonging to the Gupta period hail from Kumarpur and Niyamatpur, both in the Rajshāhi district. The wheel of the chariot, the two female attendants of the god and his consorts are not found in both the images. Most probably, these images were meant for worship of the god. Wide prevalence of the Sun cult all over Bengal from the late Gupta period is evidenced by a number of inscriptions and numerous stone sculptures. The Sun image from Deorā (Bogra) shows some development in the iconic type of Sūrya. While the contemporary Sūrya image in a Śiva temple at Bhumārā (Madhya Pradesh) was an accessory figure, the Sun image from Deorā appears to have been an object of worship in a temple. The full-fledged image of the god with all his attendants might have been imported in Bengal in the Gupta age. Greater number of lotuses found in the contemporary Kashipur image was perhaps meant to highlight the predominance of the native element in the solar iconography. However, the Sun images from Deorā or Kashipur had undoubtedly, been the products of the continuing art-tradition introduced in ancient Vaṅga by the Maga Brāhmaṇas. People in early Bengal also represented the solar deity in seated posture, though it is very rare. From the Deulbadi icon, we learn that the god Sūrya was also worshipped by the Buddhists, sometimes simultaneously with Brāhmaṇical deities; in addition to worship in temple, the Sun god was also worshipped by individuals in their houses in image form. As regards the followers, the orthodox Brāhmaṇas, the Vaiśyas etc. were also connected with the solar cult in addition to the Irānian Magas.

Like Puṇḍravardhana or Vaṅga, Sun worship was equally prevalent in *Vardhamāna-bhukti*. However, here the Sun god is identified with *Lokanātha-dharma* as referred to in the Mallasarul Copper Plate inscription (543 A.D.). The tradition of *Sāmba*'s cure by Sun worship is found to have influenced Śaśāṅka. In order to cure himself of a serious disease, he is said to have brought twelfth *Graha-vipras* from the banks of Sarayū to officiate in the *grahayajña* and offered sacrifices to nine planets. Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas occasionally came to Bengal from Upper India and popularized Sun worship and *grahayajna* by utilizing the people's belief in the curative aspect of the Sun god. In addition to the worship of the nine planets, the Sun god continued to receive adoration in the form of *Dharma* as well.

Vedic religion became increasingly stronger during the time of the Pāla-Candra-

Kambojas. In fact, all the Pāla kings were patrons of Brāhmaṇas, Brāhmaṇical images and temples and therefore, granted lands for them to enhance their own virtue and renown. The soar deity was regularly worshipped by these large numbers of orthodox Brāhmaṇas by means of *Sandhyopāsanā.* Sūrya and his worship are frequently mentioned in the contemporary inscriptions and the atmospheric aspect of the Sun becomes prominent here. It appears from the Sian (Birbhum) inscription that probably king Vigrahapāla made a gift of a chariot for a big Sun-temple for the annual *Rathayātrā.* The reference to a gift of golden lotus for *Navagrahas* and that of silver for the images of Sūrya, no doubt, speaks of intense devotion for the Sun among a section of wealthy people. Towards the end of the Pāla period, Sun worship became very popular among the Brāhmaṇa rulers of Gayā. The Gayā Gadādhara Temple Inscription of the time of Nayapāla and the Gayā Sitalā Temple Inscription of Yakṣapāla of the time of Govindapāla begin with adoration to Sūrya and the first verse is dedicated to the Sun god. *Sūrya-praṇāma* was also a popular form of the worship of the Sun in this age.

In the eleventh-twelfth centuries A.D., the Vedic Brāhmaṇism made a great progress with the support of the Varman-Sena kings. With the gradual extension of the Brāhmaṇical settlements in Bengal, the solar cult continued vigorously in its Vedic form. The Sun god was worshipped by the orthodox Brāhmaṇas through *Sandhyopāsanā* along with the Gāyatrī hymn. Viśvarūpasena and his son Sūryasena were staunch followers of the Sun god and it was in this period that the solar cult was further enhanced. Perhaps the contributory factor was the belief that the god was supposed to cure all types of diseases ("*samasta-rogāṇāṁ harttā*"). In the Madanapada and the Calcutta Sahitya Parisat Copper-plates of Viśvarūpasena as well as the Edilpur inscription of Sūryasena, the Sun god figures as the reliever of the world from the clutches of darkness, as the friend of lotus flowers and as a wonderful bird having two wings of the two fortnights of the month. This demonstrates the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* concept of the Sun that was in vogue along his worship in image. The kings' inclination for this form of solar worship shows a strong undercurrent flowing against the popular practice of the image worship of the Sun god. Kings Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena call themselves *Paramasaura,* showing the existence of an independent and seperate sect of Sun worshippers.

Sun worship is amply referred to in the religious and secular literary texts of the Varman-Sena period such as *Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa* of Vidyākara. By the time of Vidyākara, the Vedic form of sun worship of the Sun had grown into an important and exclusive cult strengthened by impact of the Sun worship of Persia. Vidyākara considered the Sun to be one of the chief divinities of Hinduism. From the verses in the *Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa* centering the Sun at Sunrise, it appears that many Hindus addressed their prayers to the heavenly body in the morning. The *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta* of Śrīdharadāsa postulates of an important position of the Sun god among the Hindus. The same text through his composition makes a clear reference of the *Sūrya-pranamamantra* by referring to salutation to the east filled with fragrance. Dhoyī in his *Pavana-dūta* refers in to the Sun temple at Triveṇī, Hooghly. Halayudha has liberally eulogized the Sun god in the *Maṅgalācaraṇa* of his *Brāhmaṇasarvasya.* The *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* states that the worshippers of the god Sūrya gain recovery from different kinds of illness. According to the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa,* "He who worships the Sun would be healthy, wealthy and prosperous and repair to the holy immortal feet'. The same Purāṇa gives us some important information about the priests who were responsible for the spread of Sun cult in India. A reference to these Brāhmaṇas is also found in the *Āryasaptaśatī* where the *grahaśānti* (propitiation of planets by sacrifices etc.) has been beautifully described.

In addition to the epigraphic evidences, there are several images of the Sun god that speak much more about the Sun-cult from the eighth to the twelfth century A. D. and even later. The number of Sun-images from the Pāla and Sena periods is very large. It appears from the find spots of the eighth century images that the anthropomorphic worship of the Sun was prevailing largely in *Varendri* and some parts of *Uttara Rāḍha.* The terracotta Sūrya from Pāhārpur portrays the deity with a halo, seated as cross-legged and holding lotuses into the uplifted hands, which reminds us of the divinity on the Bodh-Gayā railings. The temple design in a few Sun icon points to the popularity of Sun worship in temples. Sūrya and his two attendants Daṇḍī and Piṅgala are represented as wearing a pair of pointed boots, as is seen in the Sun icons of the Pāla Bengal. Discovery of only three Sun images in eighth century A.D. leads us to presume that the image worship of the god had yet not developed on an organized and widespread scale. The non-representation of the female attendants in the solar reliefs also points to its distance from Tāntric philosophy. Out of the twenty six nineth century images noticed hitherto, all the twenty five hail from Puṇḍravardhana – four from Rajshāhi, one from Bogra, three from Dinajpur and sixteen from Malda. Therefore, it can be said that image-worship of the solar deity became more popular not only in the district of Rajshāhi but also arrived at new areas like the districts of Dinajpur and Malda. Remarkable growth of Sun images in comparision to the preceding century and greater extension of their find spots might have been due to the spread of the icon-worshippers in different areas and increased belief in the *rogahartta* concept of the Sun god. The tradition of Sun worship among the Puṇḍras as referred to in the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* probably played a prominent role in the ever-increasing popularity of the image worship of Sūrya in the Puṇḍravardhana. Interestingly, three images from Gāzole (Māldā) represent the Sun god and his attendants without any boots – a feature that is extremely rare in the whole of India excepting the South. It is not unlikely that the artists who might have emigrated from South India in the trail of advancing forces from the south, brought the tradition with them. It is true, however, that the Bengali artists sometimes did not follow in all respects the iconological arrangement of any existing text in fashioning the Sun images. High boots occurs in most of the images of Sūrya as well as his attendants though they are mostly clad in *dhoti.* Saṁjñā and Chāyā, two wives of the Sun god, enter the iconographic scene, though in a very few images. Sūrya's ornaments consist of necklace, bangles, earrings and a jeweled girdle. The Bogra sculpture of the god endows him with a circular *tilaka* on the forehead. Puṇḍravardhana emerged as the centre of Sun worship in the ninth century too.

Sun images of the tenth century A.D. found in Bengal appears to be less in number than in the earlier century but its worship was extended in new areas such as Rangpur in north Bengal, Faridpur in Vaṅga and Bankura in Rāḍha. Most probably, some of the Sun worshipping people of Rajshāhi district were shifting to different places under some professional or commercial compulsion and the arrival of the popular belief in the curative aspect of Sūrya in new areas impelled the people to worship the Sun deity in image form. The only Sūrya image in Bengal standing in *tribhaṅga* (Pl. 6b) is a product of this century. Piṅgala, Daṇḍī, Aruṇa and Mahāśvetā accompany the Sun god in most of his representations. The arrow-shooting Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā also appear in a number of Sun icons while Saṁjñā and Chāyā are very seldom represented. *Upavīta* and *uttarīya* very often adorn the god.

Sun worship gained much more popularity in the eleventh century A.D. in the northern part of Benal, because of which more number of images has been discovered. Rajshāhi again maintained its position as the main centre of Sun worship followed by Dinajpur and Malda. Some new areas also came under the sphere of the solar cult. Vikrampur was an important centre of Sun worship in the Vaṅga region. The representation of *agni-kuṇḍa* in a Sun icon probably points to growing importance of sacrificial element in the religious ceremony. The image of the Sun god is usually carved partly in the round. The god and his attendants wear *dhoti* and high boots. In two sculptures, the Sun god is seen as wearing *vanamālā*, which as a characteristic attribute of Viṣṇu marks the beginning of Sūrya's assimilation with Viṣṇu. In a number of solar images, eight planets are also engraved, which undoubtedly highlights the planetary aspect of the god. In the Sun icon from Joypurhat (Bogra), the god is represented within a temple suggested by a three-lobed arch resting on a pair of pillars.

The frequent endowing of sword or dagger to the Sun god jointly or in greater number is quite in keeping with the current political situation of early Bengal. Severalimages of the solar deity from Vaṅga illustrate eleven Ādityas engraved in them. From the regional point of view, the cult was more popular in Puṇḍravardhana than in its other three counterparts: Rādhā, Vaṅga and Samataṭa. Rajshāhi again emerged as an important centre of Sun-cult in Bengal. The worship of the god in Vaṅga mainly revolved round Dacca and its adjoining area. The solar cult was not that unpopular in the *Rādhā-janapada* but here the Sun god was quickly being assimilated into the concept of a popular folk-deity *Dharmaṭhākura*.

The iconographic features of Sūrya in the twelfth century are not that different from those of the preceding century. The god continues to appear in a *kirīṭamukuṭa* topped by an *āmlaka*. The endowing of the Sun god or his attendant with *karaṇḍamukuṭa* or allotment of *jaṭāmukuṭa* for Piṅgala probably indicates the downward course of the Sun cult. In the Sun image from Badhair (Rajshāhi), we find on the forehead of the divinity a lozenge-shaped *tilaka*, which is characteristic of Buddha signifying 'nobility'. While analyzing the sculptural representation of the solar deity during the Pāla-Sena times, it is noted that the religious outlook of the northern and Irānian regions is retained, but in the meditation and interpretation of the Sun god, the Vedic and Brāhmaṇical religious concepts appears to have merged to some extent.

Features of the Sun god are traceable in the images of various cult deities. A sculpture shows the fourhanded Sun god in *padmāsana.* In his upper hands, the deity holds a pair of lotuses and the lower right and left hands carry the *Śaṅkha* and *cakra* respectively. The example appears to be a syncretic icon of Sūrya and Viṣṇu. The composite icons of Sūrya and Śiva are comparatively few except the *Mārttaṇḍa Bhairava* from Manda (Rajshāhi). Apart from Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, reconciliation and rapprochement between rival gods and their creeds is also found in the direct connection of *Bodhisattva Lokeśvara* with Hindu cult deities including Sūrya. A fragmentary sculpture of a ten-armed Sūrya-Lokeśvara with *jaṭāmukuṭa* in one head is said to be a striking combination of Sūrya and Lokeśvara (Pl. 22a). The best expression of this kind of composite image as demonastrated by Pranabananda Jash (History of Śaivism) is available from the Pradumneśvara temple in Bangladesh. The worship of images in-group of gods belonging to rival sects was also prevalent in Bengal probably in an attempt to promote the religious tolerance.

Navagrahas also received worship as a part of the solar cult. Their worship became prevalent in the post-Gupta period, gaining immense popularity in the medieval time. *Grahayajña* was performed for peace, prosperity, ample rains, long life, nourishment, destruction of enemies and success in a military campaign. *Navagraha* images were made of different materials. Besides accompanying the Sun god, the *Navagrahas* are also depicted on the *prabhāvalī* of the *Kalyāṇa-Sundara* and the 'Mother and Child' images. Śaśāṅka was cured by performing *grahayajña.* Planets like *Ravi, Candra, Budha* etc. are indirectly referred to in many inscriptions from Bengal. The Sian inscription refers to the gift of golden lotus for the image of the *Navagrahas.* The introduction of the *Grahapūjā* everywhere in India is attributed to the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas. All the *graha* images in panels and separate representations are from North and West Bengal and none from the East. Therefore, we can safely say that the worship of *Navagraha* images was more popular in North and West Bengal.

As regards the method of worship, the Vedic way of Sun worship through the recitation of the hymns and the offerings was possibly prevalent among the orthodox section of the Brāhmaṇas and other higher classes. *Sandhyopāsanā* as a form of Sun worship must have been practiced by the conservative Brāhmaṇas. *Sūrya-namaskāra* was also in vogue. It was at the dawn that many Hindus, irrespective of sect, addressed their prayers to the Sun. Image worship of the Sun god at home and in temple was undoubtedly popular. Sun cult was also influenced by the Tāntric cult, though outwardly. The Sun was worshipped at dawn, noon and sunset. From the reference to the Puṇḍras and Suhmas as the Sun worshipping tribes, land-donation for Sun temple and the designation of Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena as *Parama-Saura* as well as the discovery of large number of solar images from this region, it appears that sun worship was prevalent in Bengal throughout the early period and there might have developed the centers of Sun worship in Puṇḍravardhana, especially in Mandara and at the *Gaṅgāsāgara-saṁgama* exclusively meant for the solar deity.

Distinct worship of Sun images is not noticeable from the medieval times because of various reasons. No backing of high philosophy so essential for greatness in religious matters was available to Sūrya because of his daily visibility to the naked eye. The Maga Brāhmaṇas who were responsible for the popularity of Sun worship in image and in the temples were degraded in the society because of their study of astrology, giving up of Vedic religion, their association with the lower untouchable classes and their hypocritical nature. The Sun was reduced from an exalted position to the status of a *graha* because of the extreme fondness of the Maga Brāhmaṇas for astrology and *grahayajña*. The solar cult could not assimilate some of the fundamental principles of Tāntricism because of which no concept of *Saura-Śakti* developed around the wives of Saṁjñā or Chāyā. The emergence of *Pañcopāsanā* also left no scope of exclusive worship of the Sun god. Royal patronage was almost not available for the solar cult. With the rise of Vaiṣṇavism, Viṣṇu, originally a solar deity, absorbed in himself much of the solar elements. The preponderance of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism over-shadowed the cult of the Sun god. To revive the waning popularity of the Sun cult, the Sun-deity even began to be called Hari as well as Śiva. Due to preponderance of the Vedicism in the Varman-Sena age, the indigenous form of Sun worship without image and temple was gaining ground. It is not unlikely that the place of the Sun god was gradually occupied by Dharmathākura in some parts of Bengal.

Exclusive worshippers of the Sun-god are hardly traceable in the present day. However, every Hindu irrespective of sects does pay his respect to the rising and setting Sun. Ramification of Sun worship is confined nowadays among the Hindu women of eastern India (*Prācyadeśa*) who still observe a number of *Sūrya-vratas* such the *Māghamaṇḍala, chaṭ-Pūjā, Itupūjā* etc. The question naturally arises as to what led to the decline of the solar cult in subsequent centuries. It is true that the absence of royal patronage afterwards played a significant role in the process, but the position of the Maga Brāhmaṇas (Devala-Brāhmaṇas) who were singularly known for their lesser avocations (like those of astrology, casting of horoscope and association with the lower strata of the society as priests) and who were associated with the worship of the Sun, played a distinct role in the decline of Sun worship in general.

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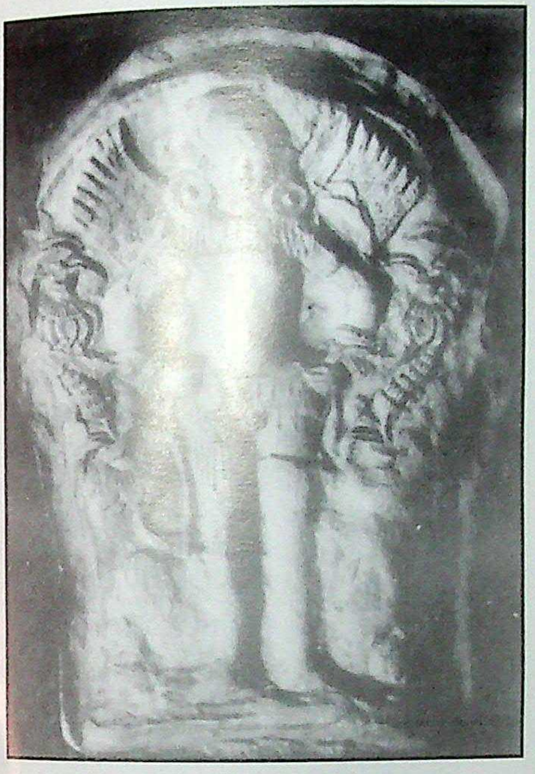

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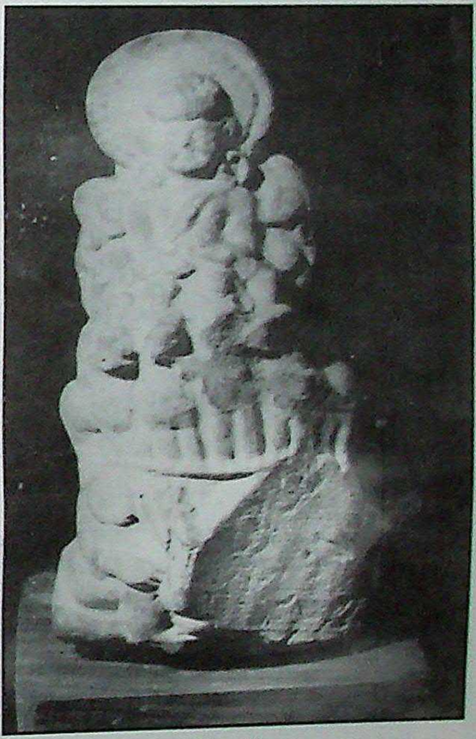

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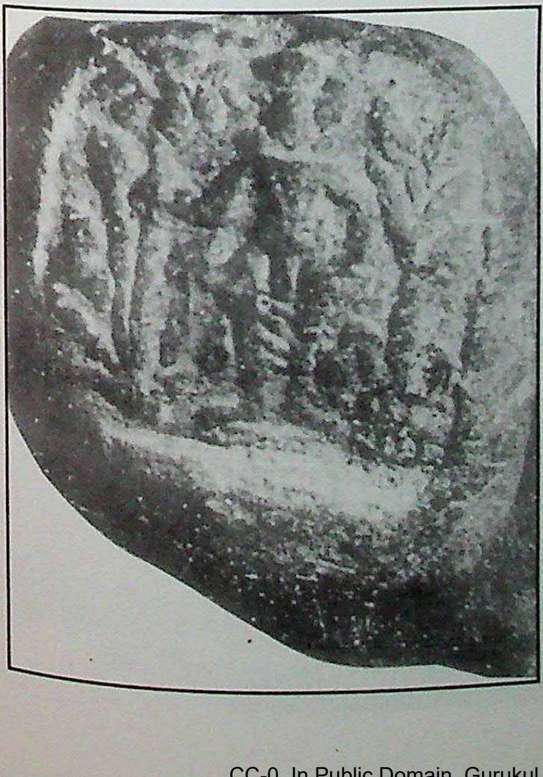

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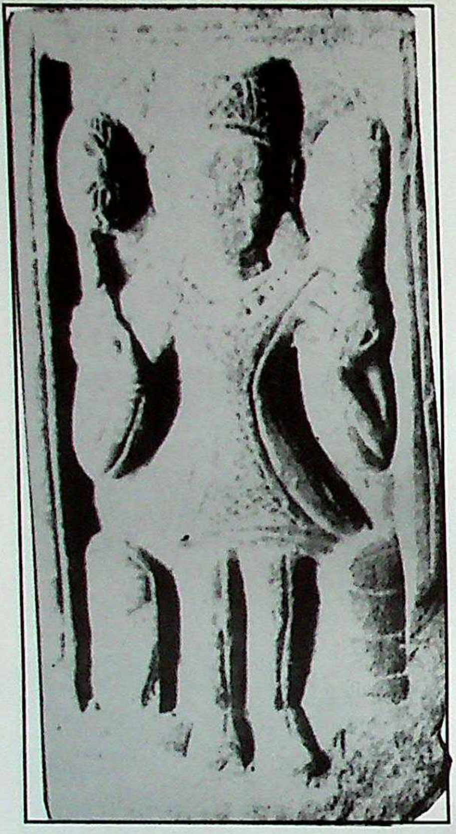

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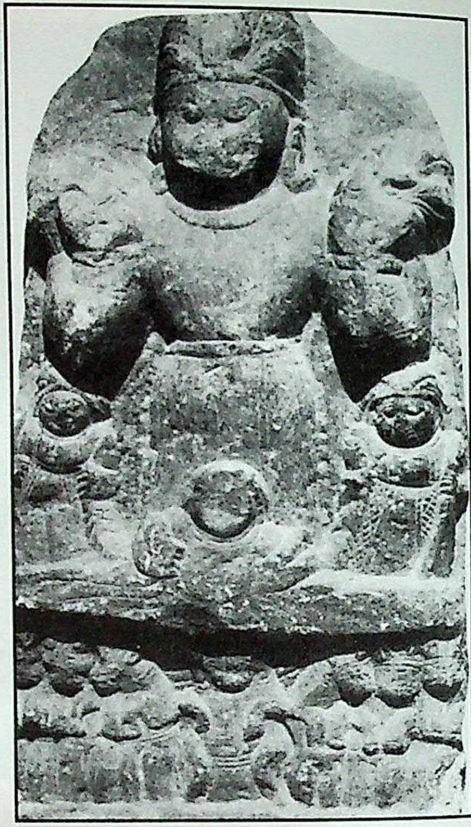

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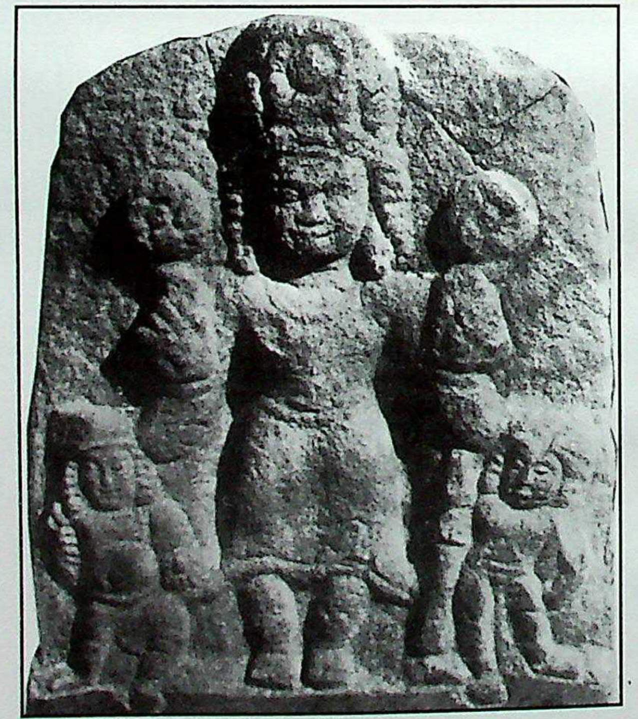

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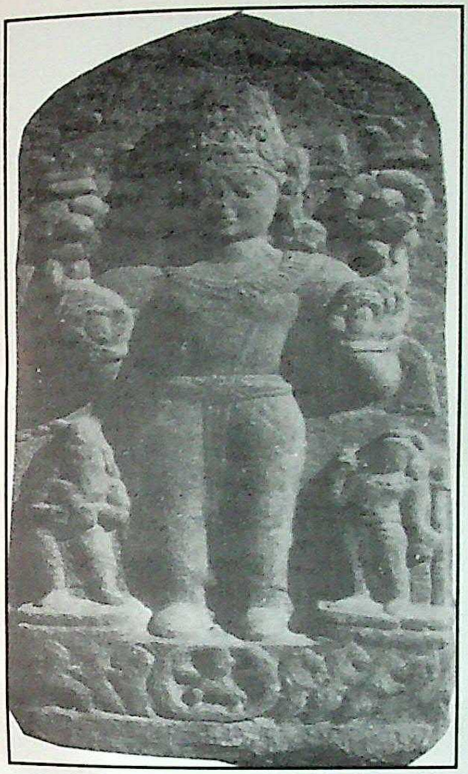

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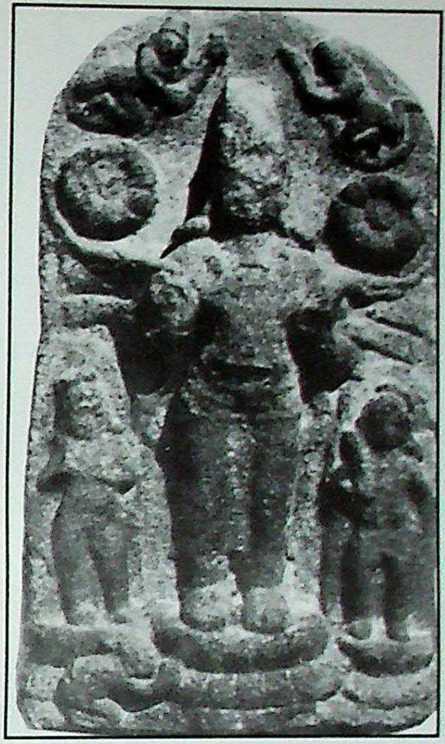

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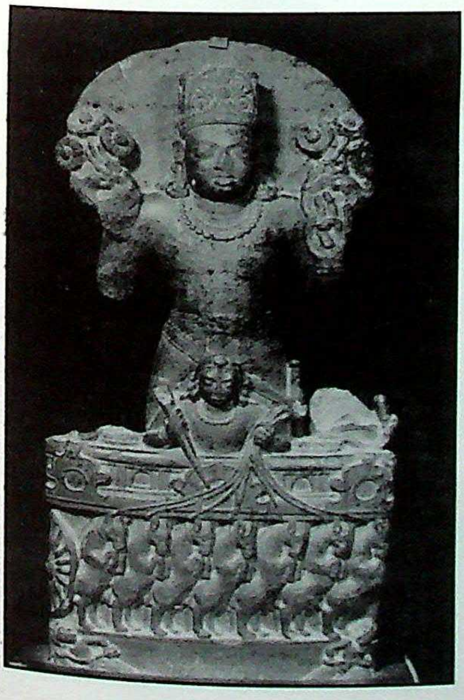

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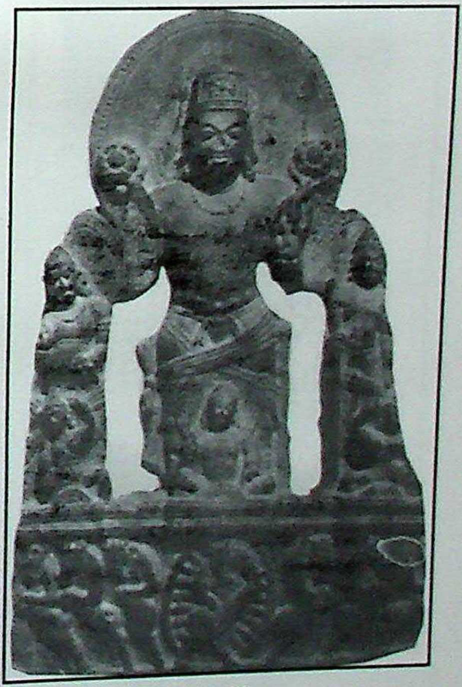
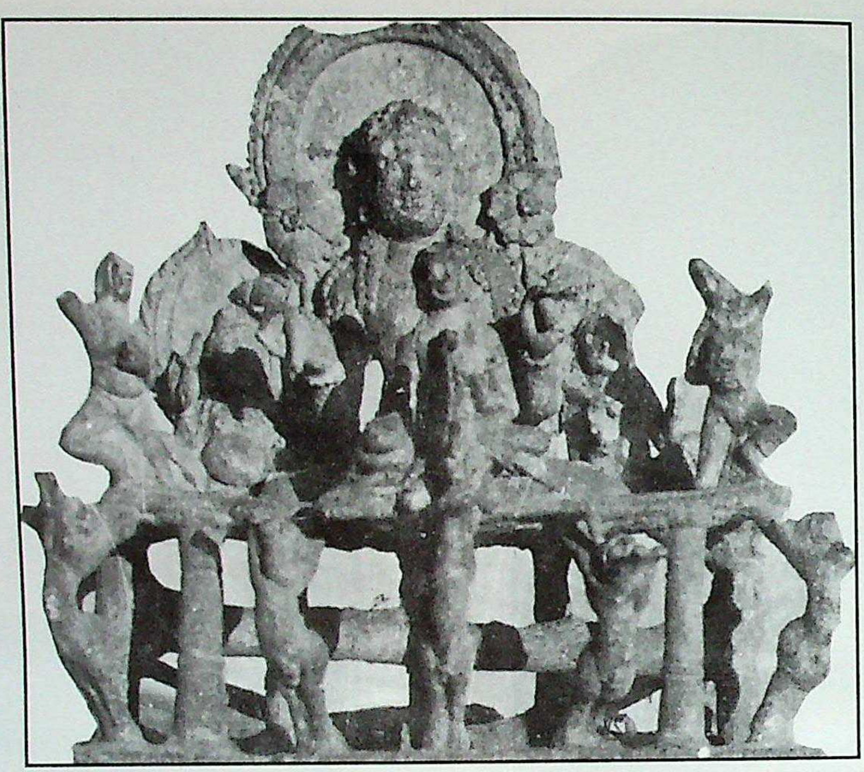
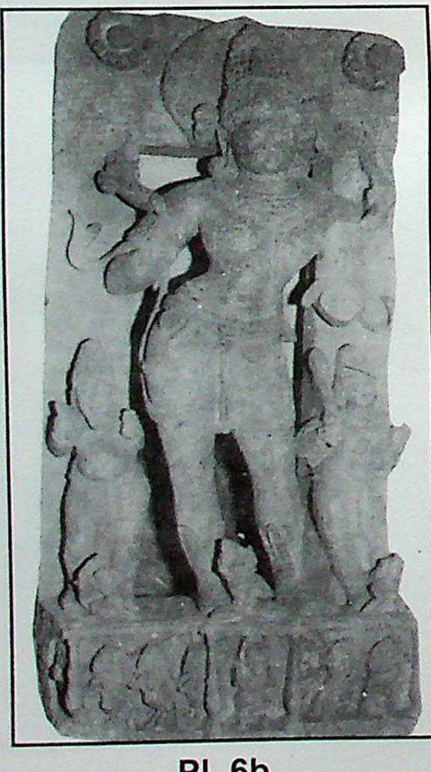


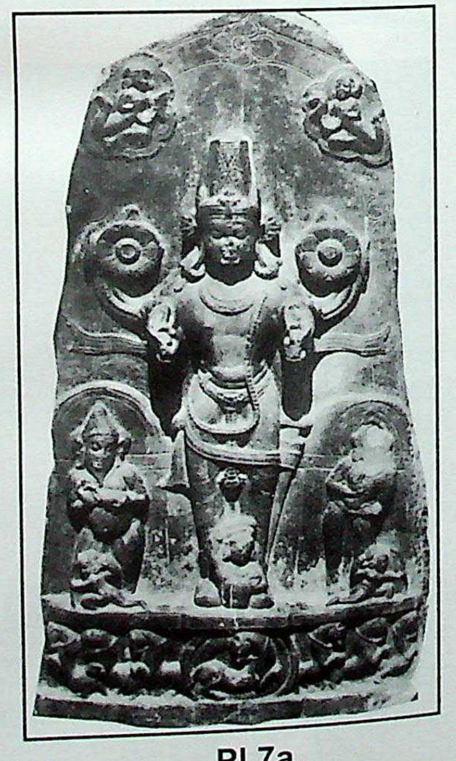
Pl. 5b.



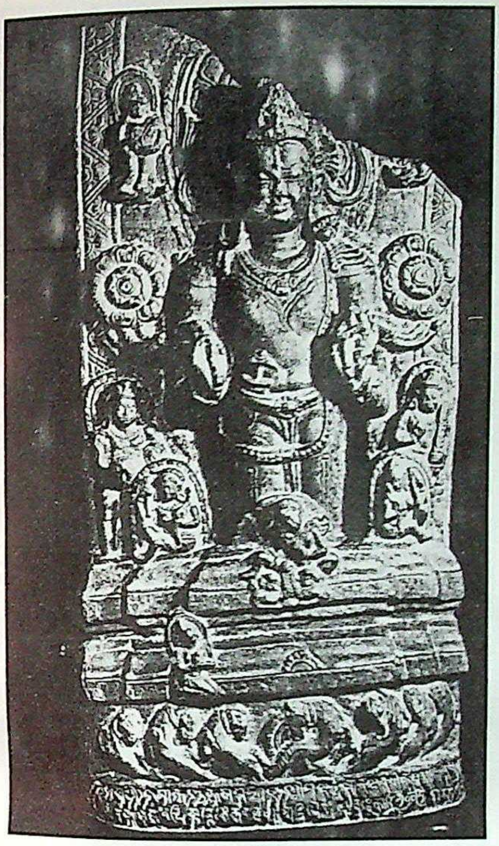
Pl. 6a.



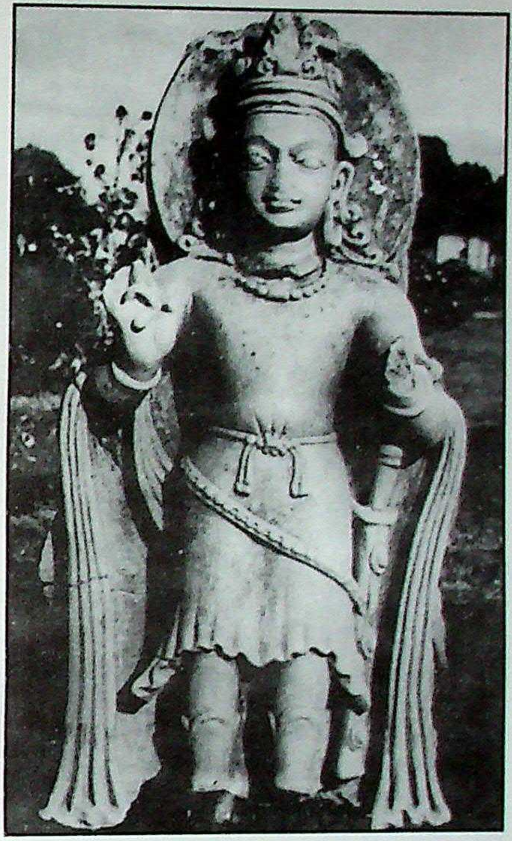
Pl. 6b.



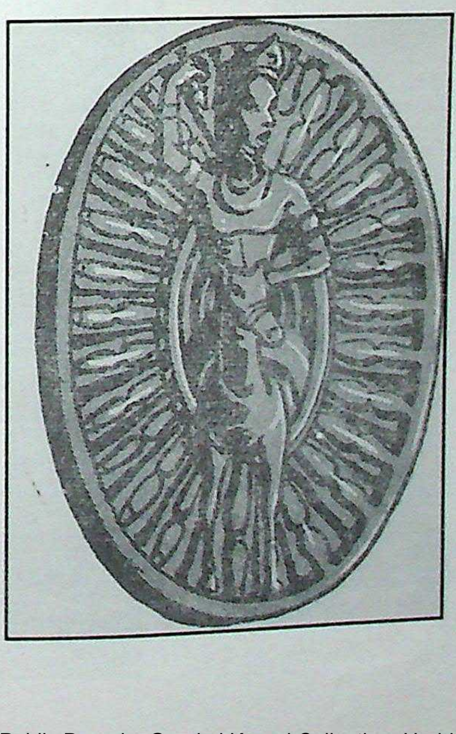
Pl.7a.



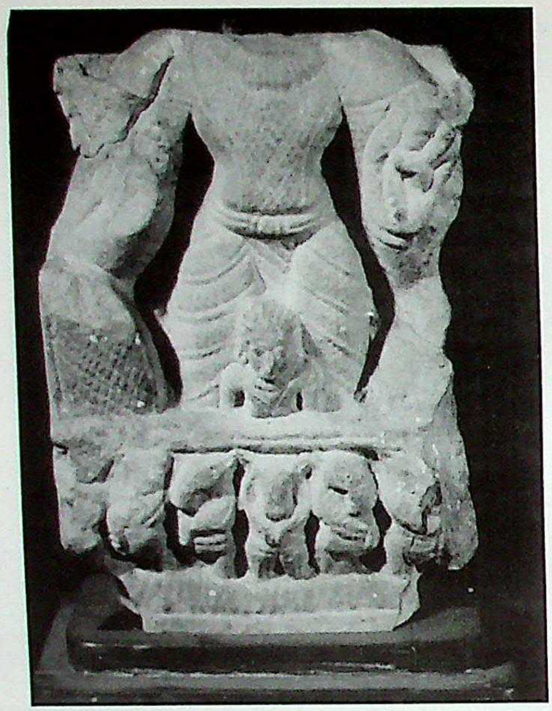
Pl. 7b.



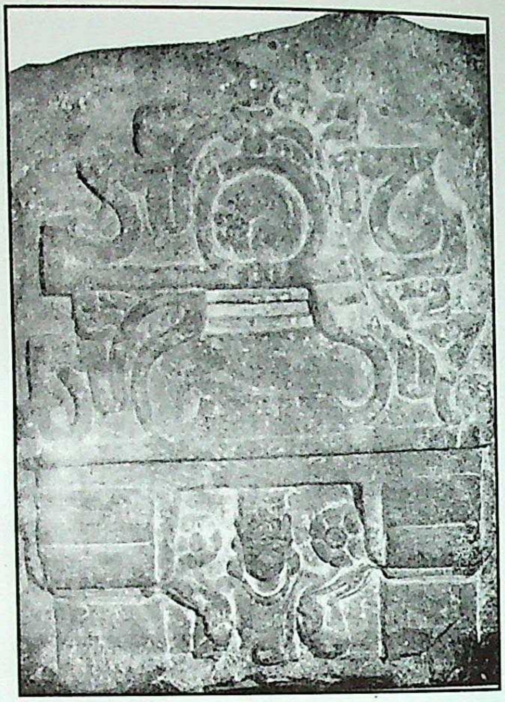
Pl.8a.



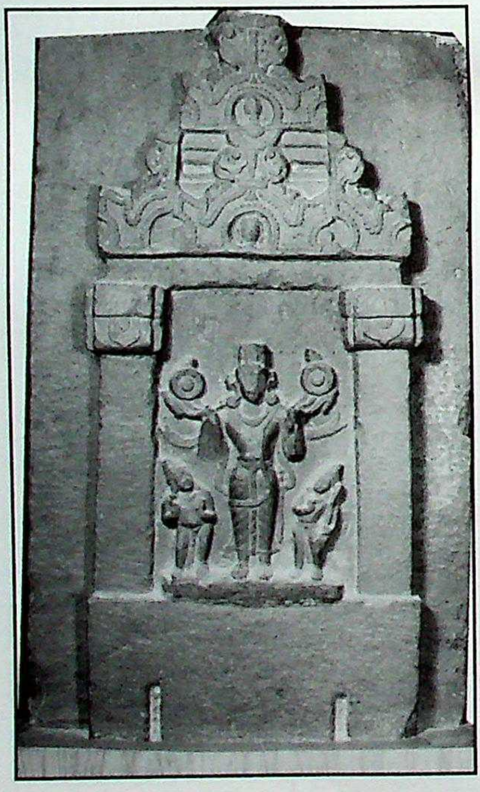
Pl. 8b.



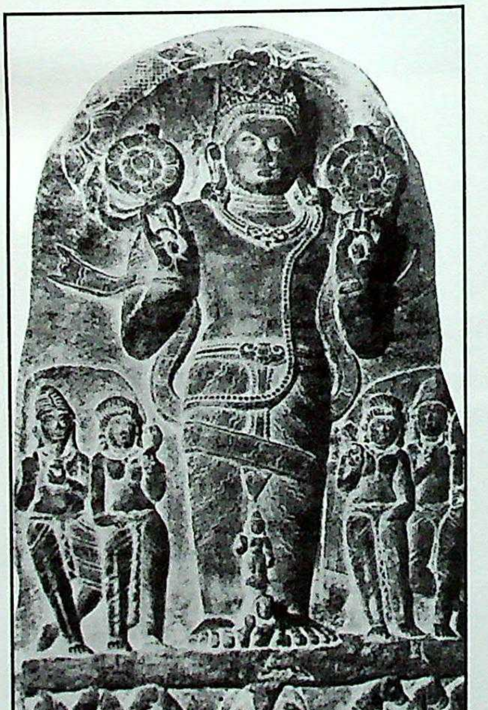
Pl.9a.



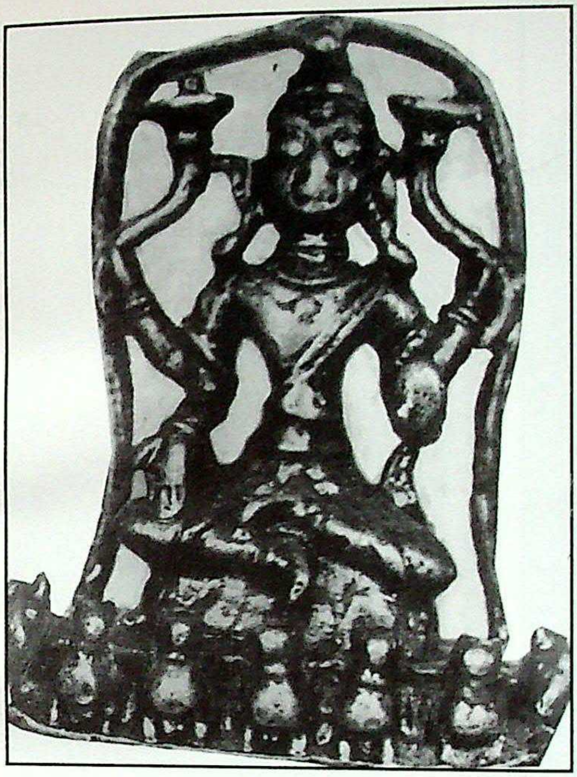
Pl. 9b.



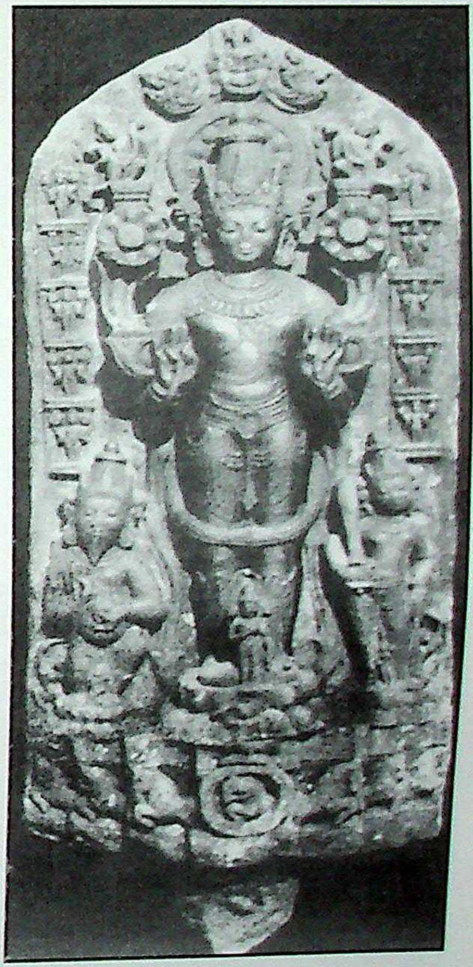
Pl.10a.



Pl. 10b.



Pl.11a.



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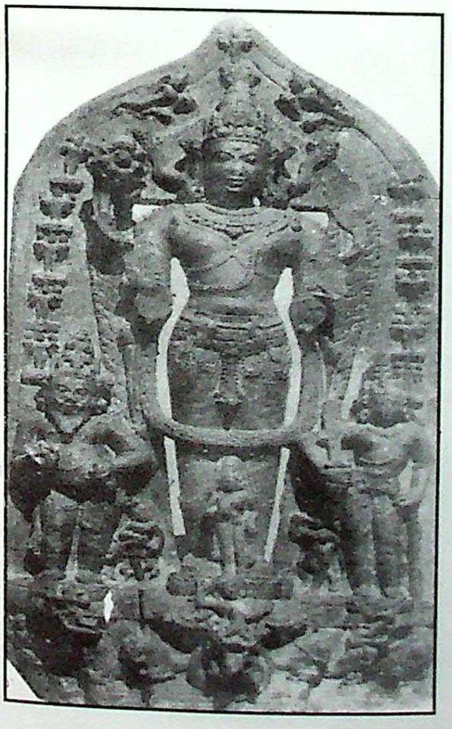
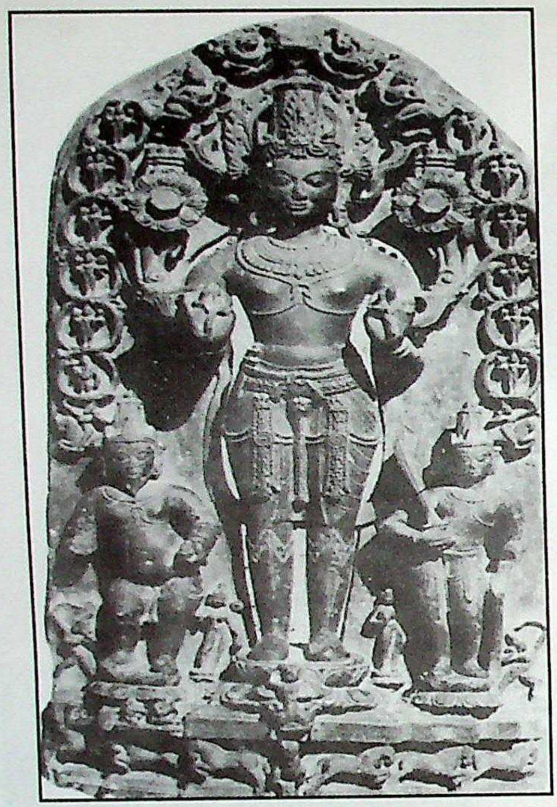
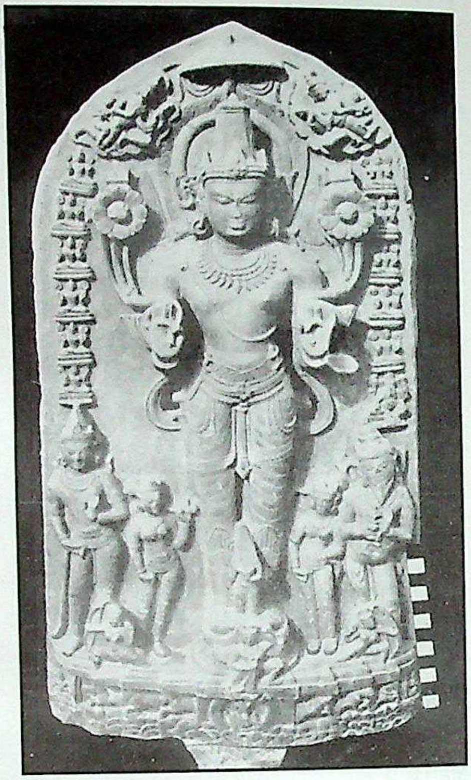


Pl. 11b.



Pl. 12b.



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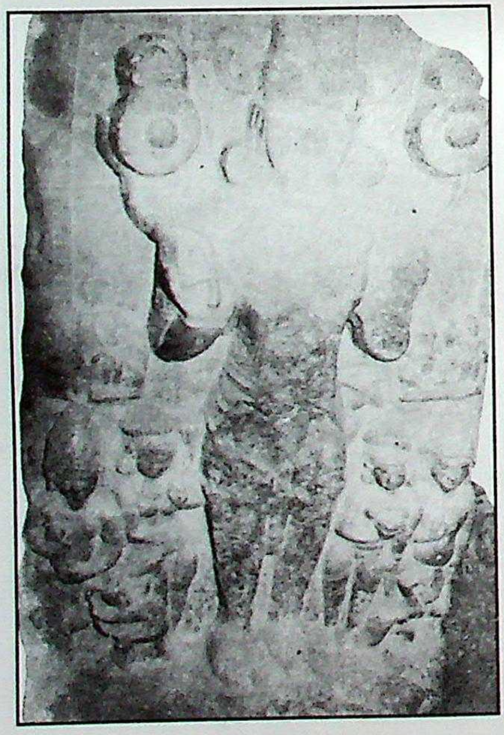

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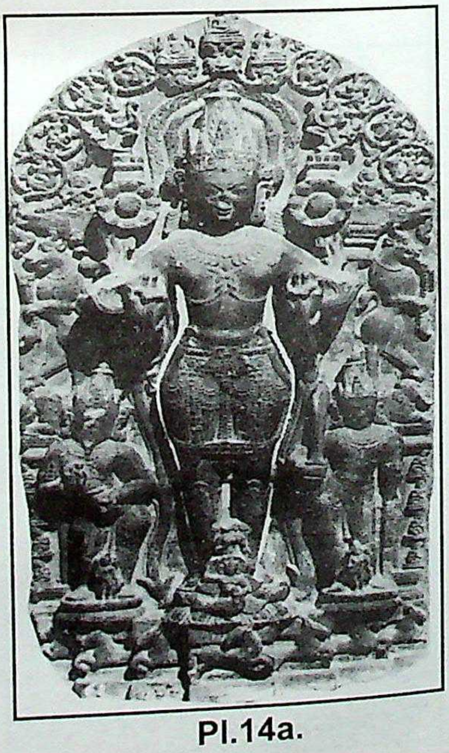

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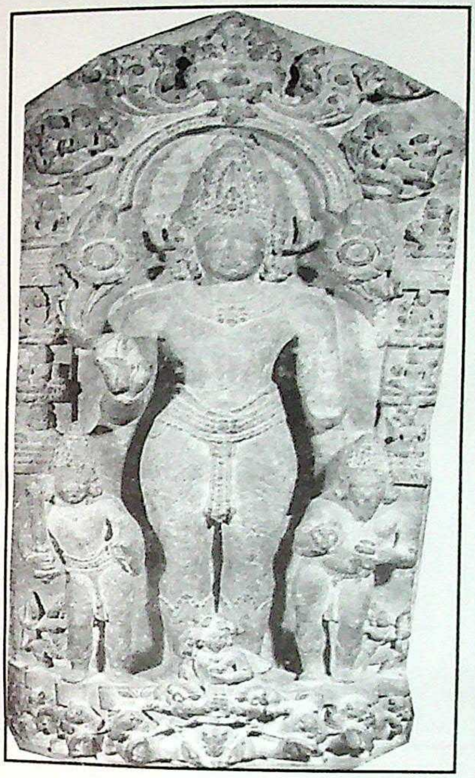
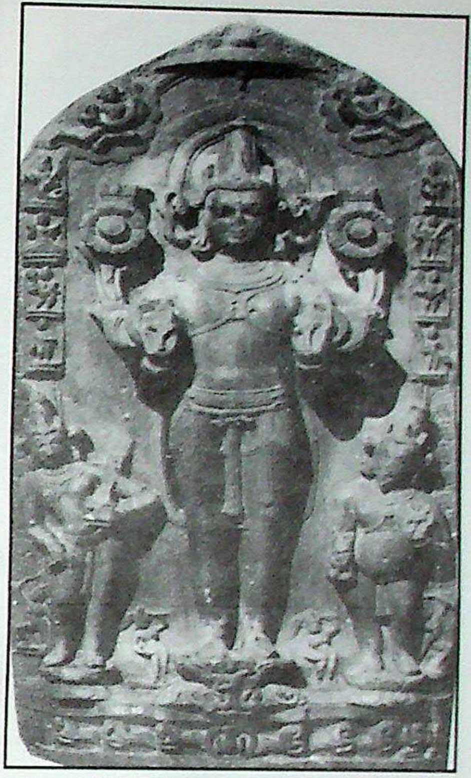
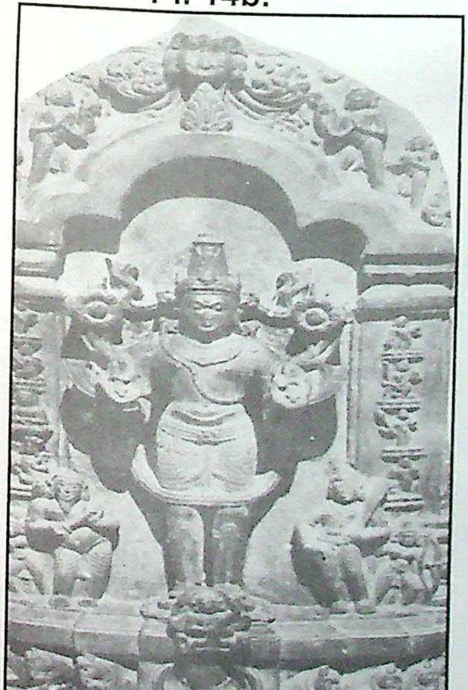


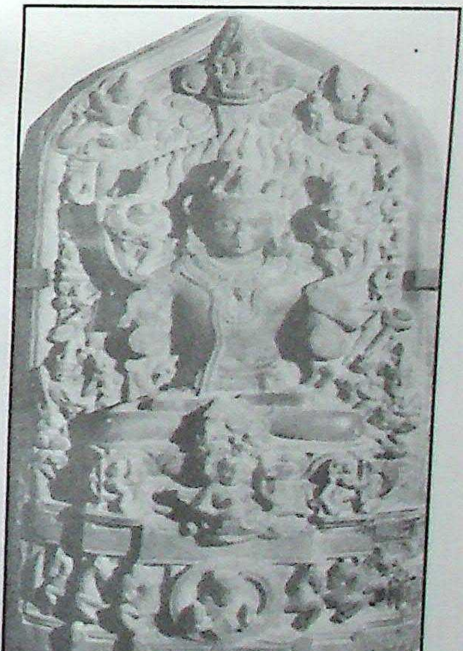
Pl. 14b.



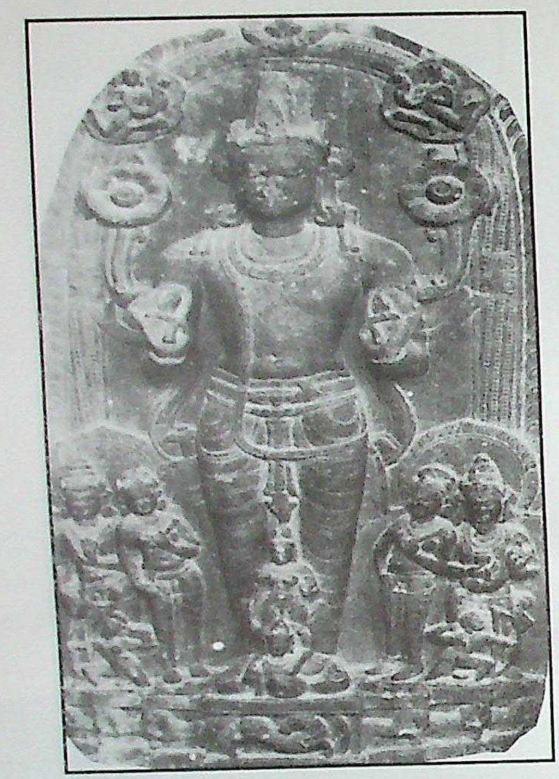
Pl.15a.



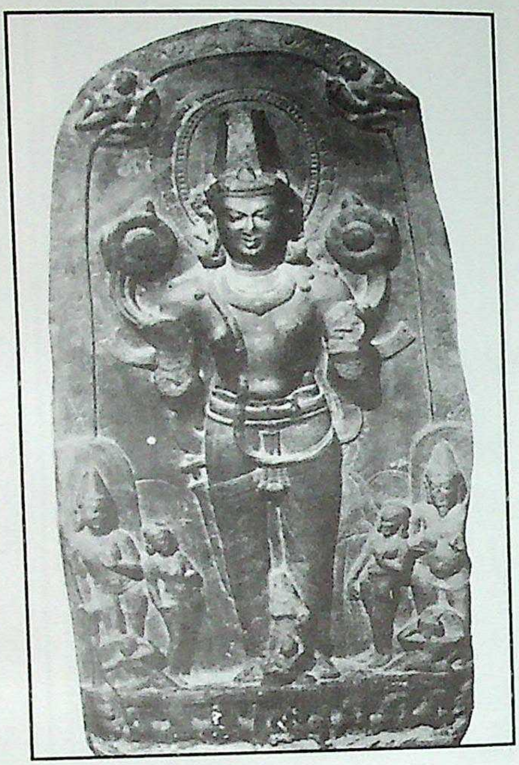
Pl. 15b.



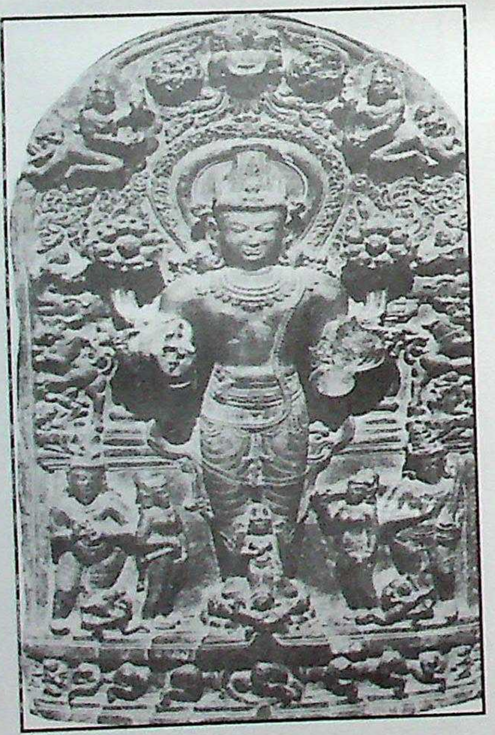
Pl.16a.



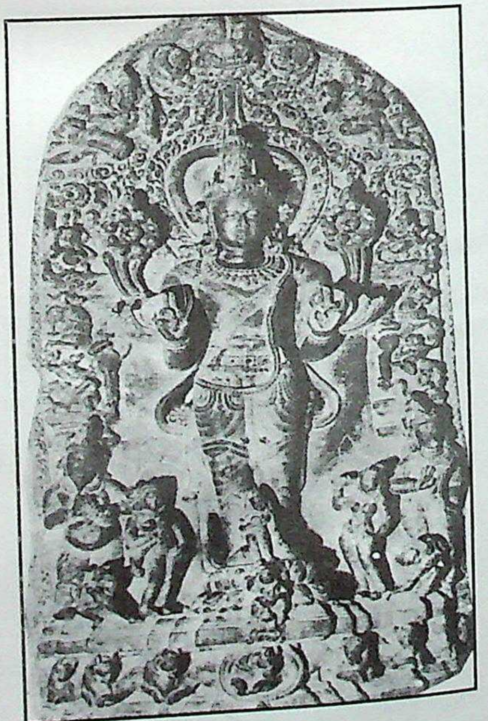
Pl. 16b.



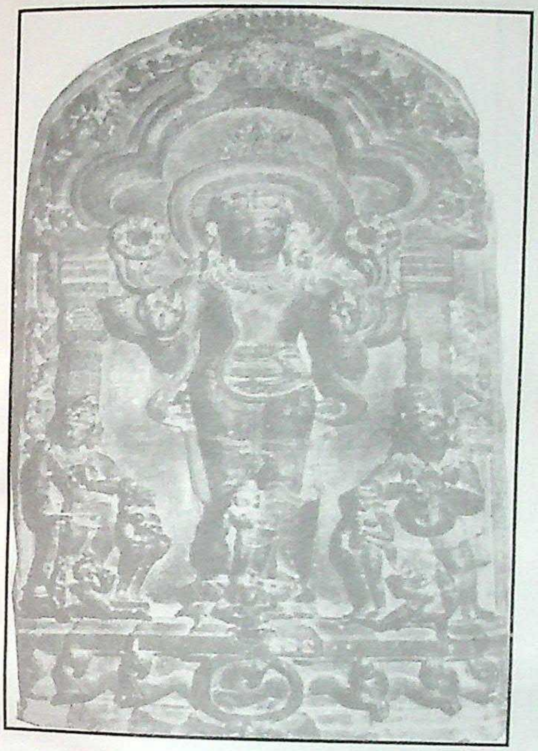
Pl.17a.



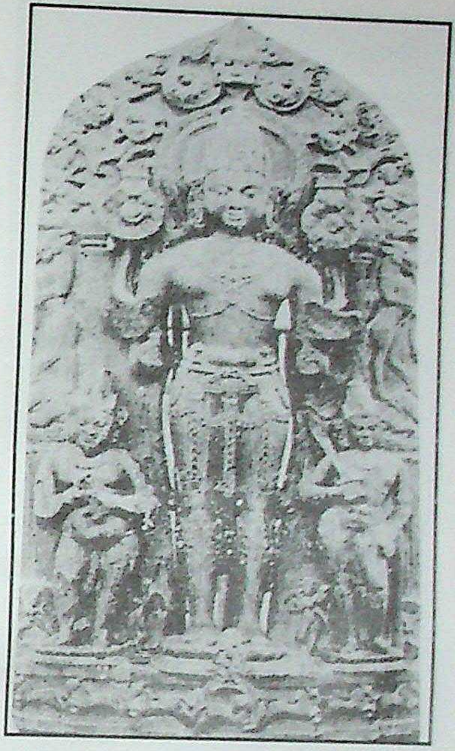
Pl. 17b.



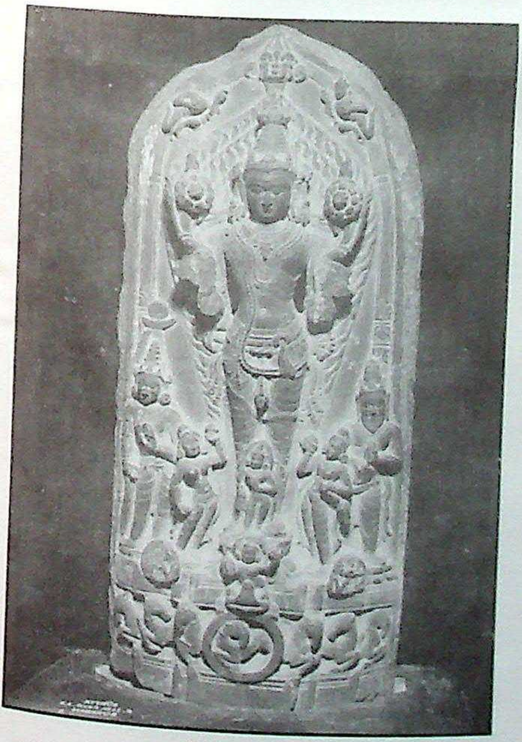
Pl.18a.



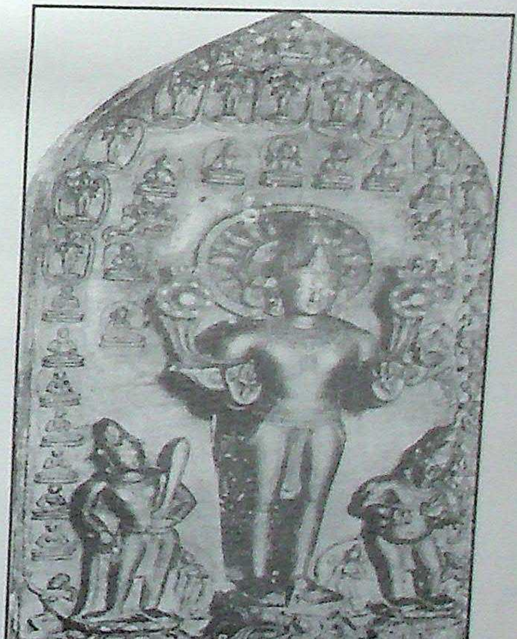
Pl. 18b.



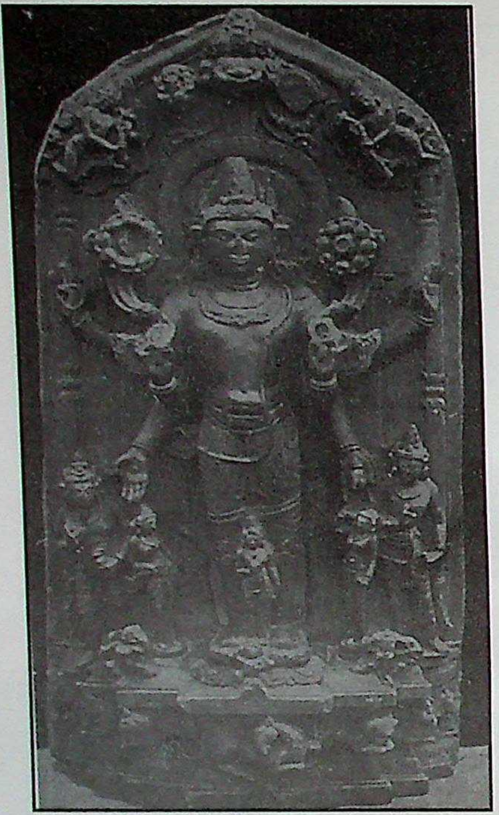
Pl.19a.



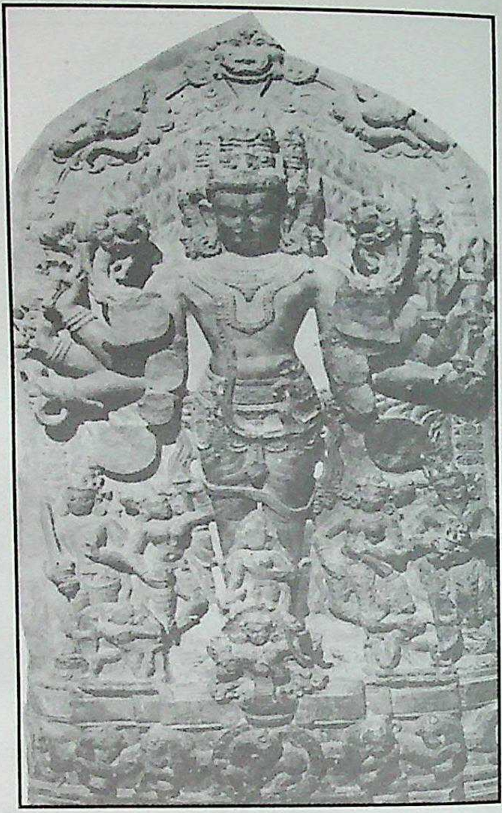
Pl. 19b.



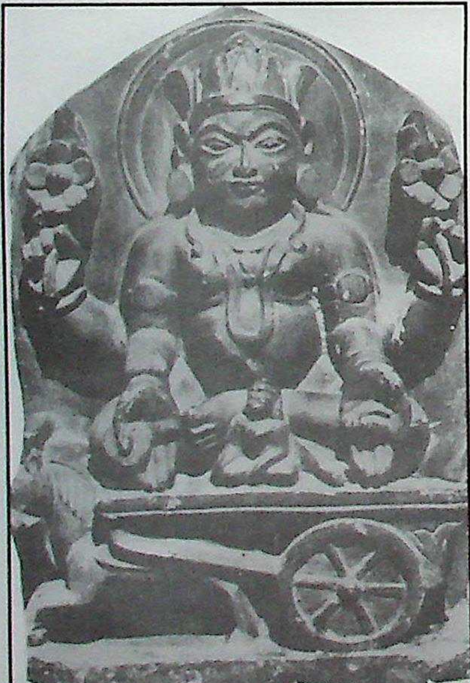
Pl.20a.



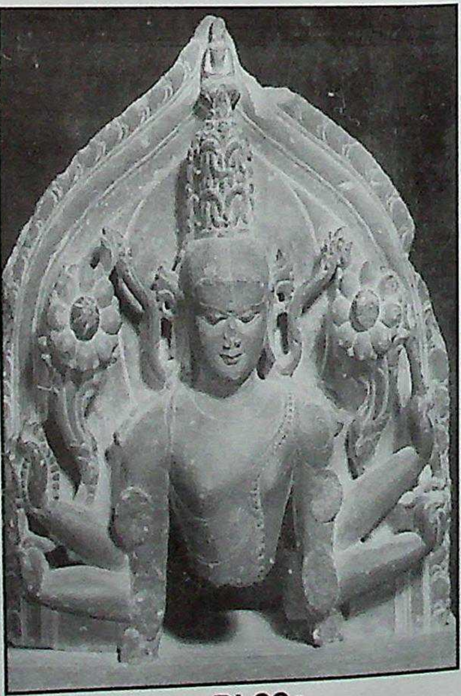
Pl. 20b.



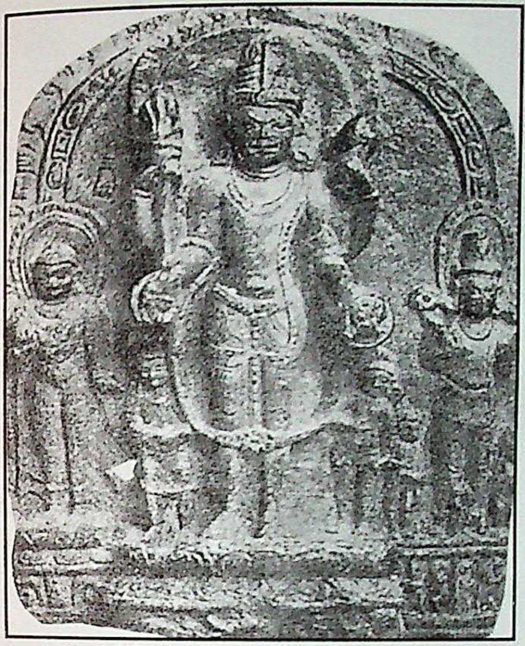
Pl.21a.



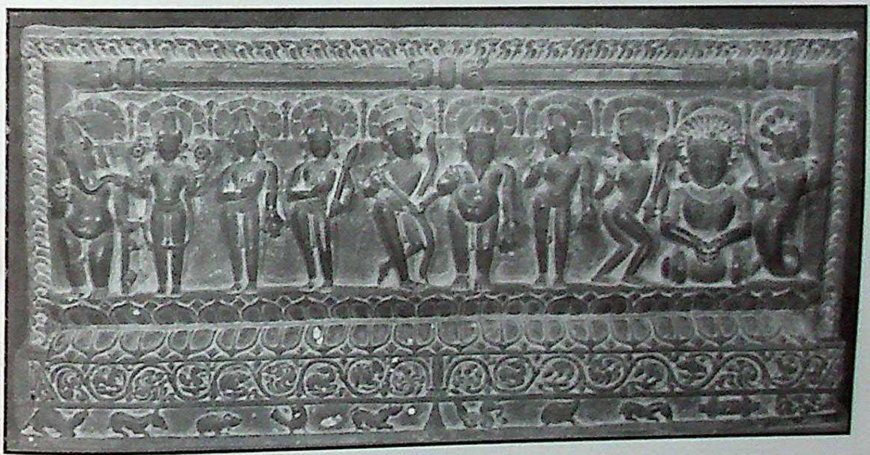
Pl. 21b.



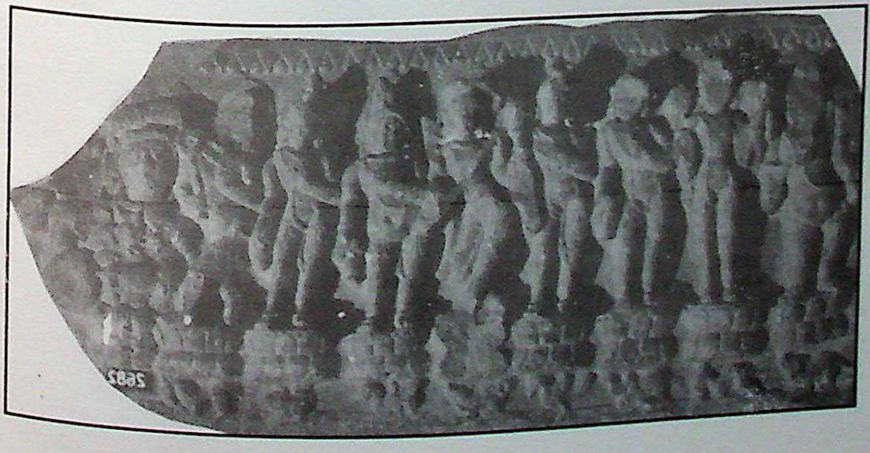
Pl.22a.



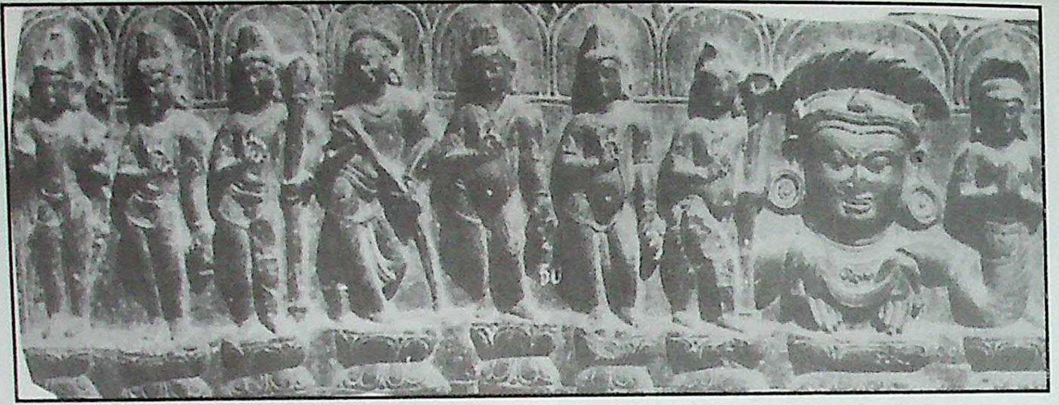
Pl. 22b.



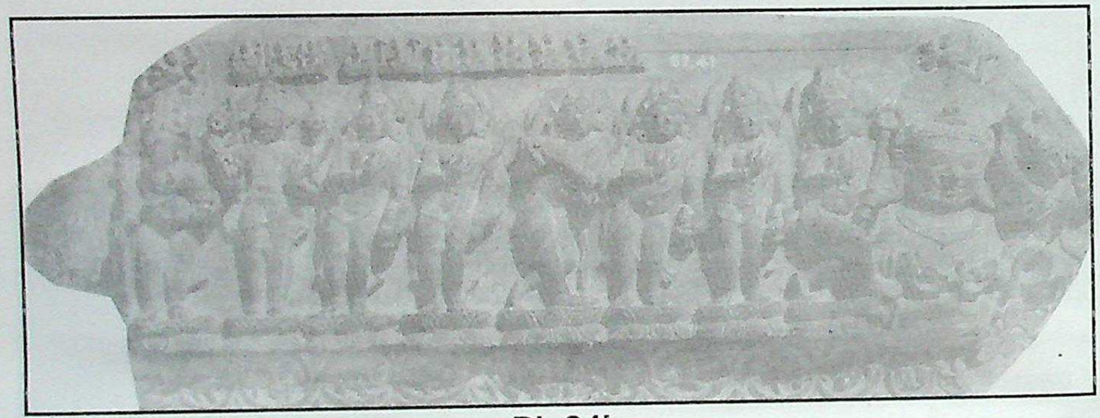
Pl.23a.



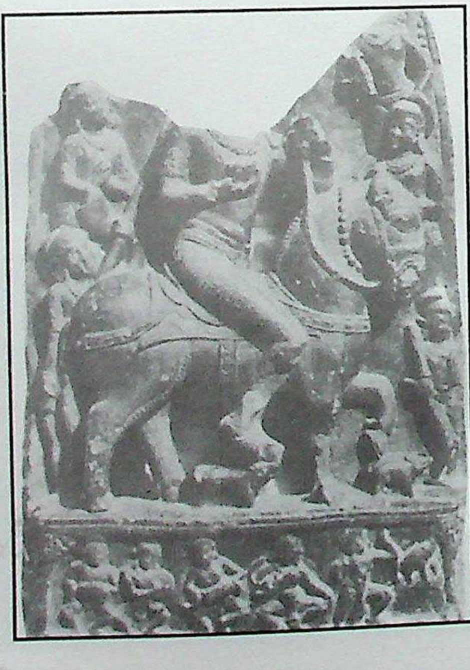
Pl. 23b.



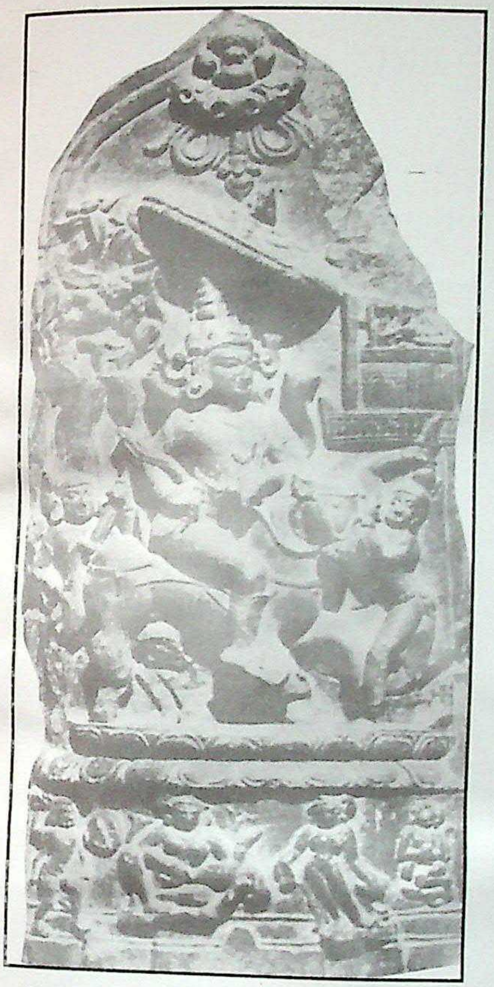
Pl.24a.



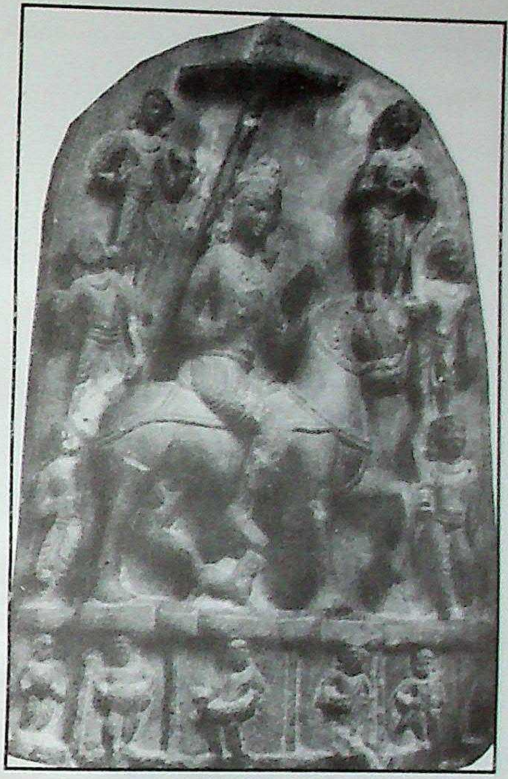
Pl. 24b.



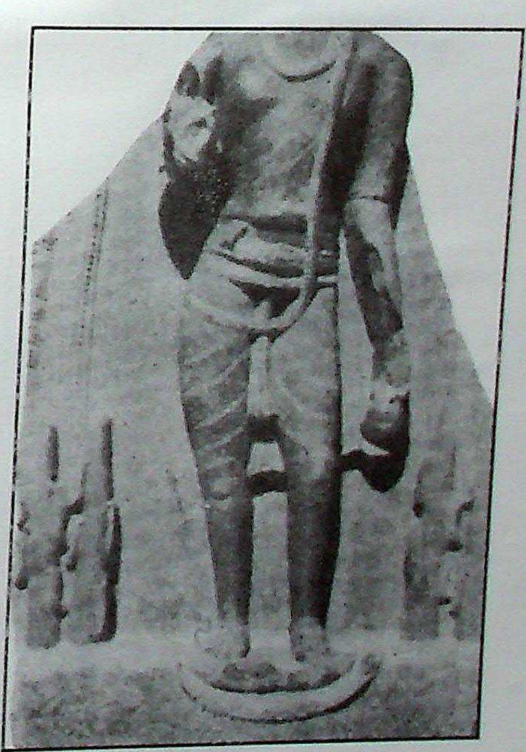
Pl.25a.



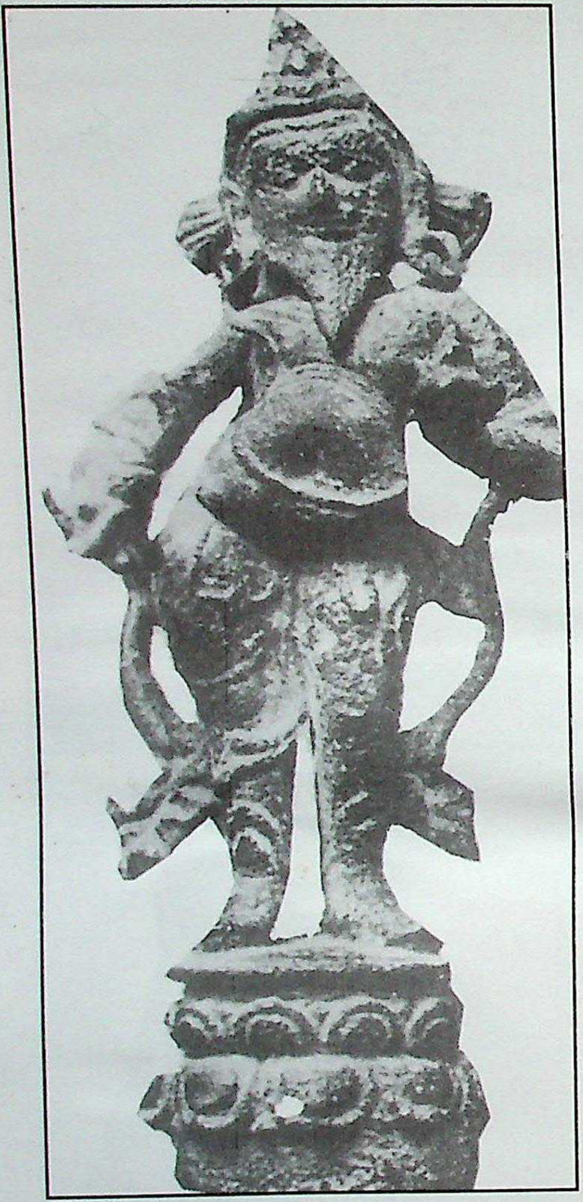
Pl. 25b.



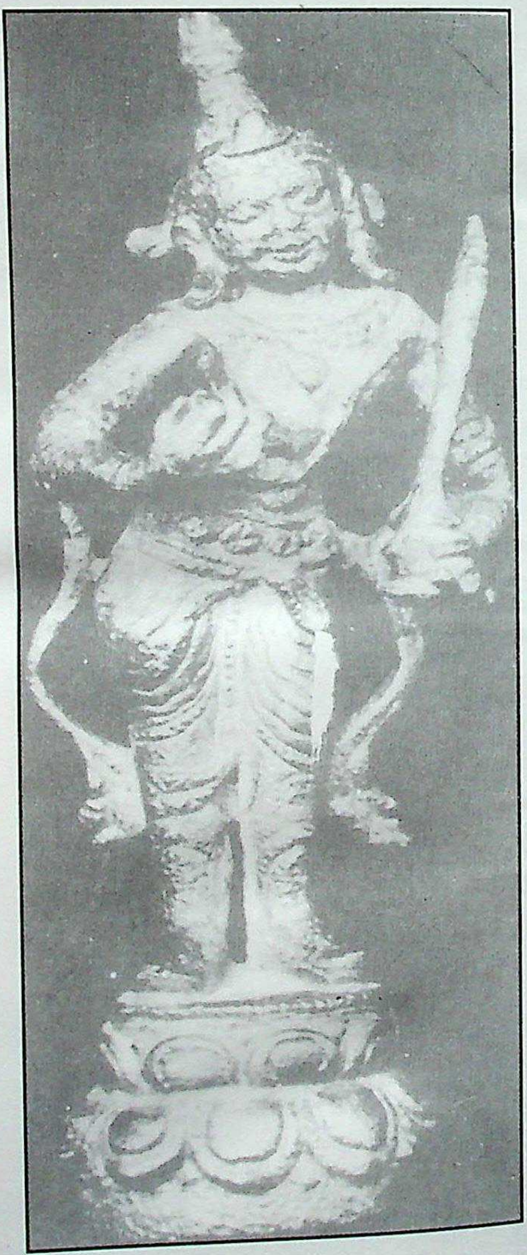
Pl.26a.



Pl. 26b.



Pl.27a.



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Pl. 27b.

पुस्तकालय
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